AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY

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SYDNEY OLYMPIC 'PRIVATISED'

THE FIVE WHITE KNIGHTS

Sydney Olympic's five 'White Knights' who rode in with an $11.4 million rescue package stretching over six years. From left to right: George Drivas (property owner and developer), Nick Balagannis (Australia's second largest manufacturer of poker and game machines), Nick Politis (owner and Managing Director of car dealership City Ford), Matthew Lepouris (property developer) and Jim Tsagias (owner of picture theatre complex and investor).

$11.4 MILLION RESCUE PACKAGE FOR OLYMPIC

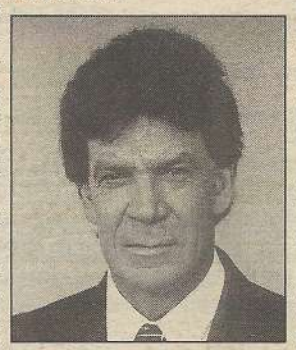
By John Economos

Sydney Olympic, Australia's 'sleeping giant' of Soccer, and the Club which with monotonous regularity for the past 21 years has been plagued with financial turmoil, is about to rise.

Last Saturday afternoon, at an extraordinary general, and most passionate meeting, lasting some four hours and held at the Sydney Olympic Sporting Club at Hurlstone Park, it became official.

"Sydney Olympic was privatised".

With almost 600 Members voting in the Club's most crucial meeting on the two bidding factions, 'Five White Knights' calling themselves 'Friends Of Sydney Olympic', won the battle for control of the Club.



John Warren: Olympic's Soccer Consultant.

The Five White Knights, (all multi millionaires and all Sydney based), headed up by mega car-dealership owner Mr Nick Politis (City Ford), gained a 51% control of the Club.

The rescue package tabled by the super-rich Big Five totalled a monumental $11. 4 million.

The Politis syndicate edged out sole rival bidder, Sydney's flamboyant former stockbroker Rene Rivkin.

The voting was so close that a second count was called for.

Final result: Politis Syndicate 304, Rivkin 271.

The defeated Rivkin is believed to possibly now have a 'Plan B' firmly fixed in his mind in acquiring his own Soccer team.

The Newcastle Breakers could well be Rivkin's next target.

Meanwhile the Politis syndicate moved fast to appoint as their Soccer Consultant former Australian World Cup captain, John Warren.

Warren recently returned from Brazil where he had meetings with the C.B.F. regarding Brazil's Olympic team that will tour here next month.

The Politis syndicate signed Warren on a three-year contract.

The syndicate has authorised an immediate cash injection as working capital of some $1.8 million.

This most urgently needed cash ploughed into the coffers of Olympic is to pay off its crippling list of debts totalling just over the million dollar mark.

The balance has been tagged as working capital till the end of the season.

Sydney Olympic now becomes Australia's fifth privatised Soccer club in the Ericsson League.

The Newcastle Breakers was the first before Nick Tana's Perth Glory surfaced in the League two years ago.

This season Carlton became the third privatised Soccer club in the Ericsson League whilst just three weeks ago the Northern Spirit, Sydney's newly formed outfit, was admitted into the League for next season.

DUE TO OUR COMMITMENT TO BRING YOU MORE NEWS, WE FOREGO OUR EDITORIAL AGAIN THIS WEEK.

OLYMPIC TEAM IN CAMP

By Nick Guoth

Last week the Australian Olympic team was in camp at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.

The squad of 30 players were put through multiple training sessions together with three games to provide match practice.

These matches were against the AIS, the Canberra Cosmos and the ACT Rockets (all played at the AIS fields).

For Olyroos coach Raul Blanco these games allowed his players to match themselves against intellectual, fast and physical opposition.

The Olyroos coach stated that the camp was "excellent for us. These are wonderful facilities and we have allowed all players a chance to prove themselves, especially under match conditions. It was a good week and we have learnt a lot about the players."

For Raul, the next step is to cut the squad down to 22 before the next camp later this month.

Sadly one player who will not be making the cut is Ivan Zelic, who suffered a fractured ankle after a nasty challenge in the match against his team-mates the Canberra Cosmos.

Nevertheless those who impressed and look likely to make the cut are Michael Curcija and Zeljko Susa. Dean Culina was also in a class of his own in the midfield and should be a shoe-in. But they will need to keep on their toes as there is a further cut to trim down the squad to 18 for the matches against Brazil.

The results of the three matches were a 3-0 win over the AIS, with Susa scoring two headers and Wayne Knipe picking up the other goal. The second was a 0-1 loss to the Canberra Cosmos — Michael Musitano scoring in the 88th minute after the Olyroos defence was left stranded by some excellent ball-play.

Finally, the Olyroos returned to winning form with a 4-2 victory over the ACT Rockets; Knipe bagging two, Travis Dodd another and an own-goal the fourth for the Olyroos.

Two excellent shots by Joe Campagna were the replies for the Rockets.

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HUNTER NOT RETURNING

By Glenn Davis

Talk of former Brisbane Strikers' skipper Alan Hunter returning to play for the reigning champions this year is just that.

Frank Farina confirmed after the Strikers' 3-nil loss to Sydney United that Hunter would not be returning to play for the Strikers this year, despite being allegedly sacked by his Melbourne club Carlton.

"And as far as for next season, we have no plans to take him back at this stage, although we are keen to talk to him should he return to Brisbane," Farina said in the weekend press.

"Then you have to consider the fact he hasn't played many games in the past year due to injury," he said.

Meanwhile Farina has not given up hope of the Strikers making the Final Six despite their 3-nil flogging by Sydney United on Saturday night.

"Mathematically it is still possible but it's going to be tough," he said.

Farina rated the Strikers performance against Sydney United as atrocious. "They had control of the middle of the park while we were non-existent," he said.

"I've always thought 39 points would get us into the finals but it's still possible with four home and four away games."

Farina also hinted that he would experiment with several youngsters with a view for next season once their fate was known.

"We've already started to look at next season in terms of recruitment and letting players go, but yes, I may give some of the younger players a chance soon."

BRAZILIANS COME TO ACADEMY

THE FOOTBALL ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE (FAE), commences its new term of Brazilian football coaching on February 23 with a few exciting bonuses for its enrolled students.

Recently returned from Brazil, FAE Director Leon Gardikiotis stated to ABSW of the surprises: "In Brazil I had some discussions with the Brazilian Olympic coach who asked me to select six young players to play in training games with his team which will be touring Australia in March.

"The Brazilian master was already aware of our Football Academy of Excellence and is most interested in seeing our operations in Sydney."

Since the FAE represents the Brazilian Football Academy of Rio here in Australia, its students will be given special treatment according to FAE coach Vince Colagiuri who stated to ABSW this week: "We'll have them (the Brazilian Olympic team) at our training session to show our students some of their undoubted magic. It will be a once in a lifetime experience for any Soccer player.

"There are plans as well for all our students to do a half-time demonstration at the Australia vs Brazil match that will be played in Sydney," ended Mr Colagiuri.

The FAE enters its second year of coaching whilst gaining popularity and credibility.

Centres are situated in Sydney's south at Miranda and inner-west at Concord. Boys and girls seven to 17 are taught the Brazilian secrets by a highly qualified coaching staff.

The program runs three times per year for 12 weeks.

Another bonus is the fact that the Academy could soon be shifting its Concord Centre over to the magnificent lush Concord Oval, which boasts one of the finest playing surfaces in all Sydney.

For further information on the Academy, refer to advert on page 3 or call the office on 02-9550-2022.

Vince Colagiuri: Leads the Academy's students in a Brazilian rhythmic warm-up session at Concord.

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STAFF
EDITOR: .....Micky Brock
SUB EDITOR: .....Aidan Ormond
STAFF REPORTER: .....John Economos
LAYOUT/TYPESETTING: .....Mary Quartly
LAYOUT/TYPESETTING: .....Jodee Rogers
PHOTOGRAPHY: .....Jorge Gonzalez
SCANDESK:.....Stewart Johnson
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GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL

By John Economos

Parramatta Eagles, successfully coached by former Australian World Cup defender Dougie Utjesenovic to win the NSW Super League championship last season, flew out of Sydney last Sunday bound for Fiji.

As champions of NSW, Soccer NSW, (President Peter Gray to be more precise), arranged that the Eagles fly across to Fiji to play two inaugural challenge matches against the Fijian Champions to strengthen and help develop our Oceania neighbour, the Fijian FA, in developing the code in that country.

It's hoped that these two challenge matches between the two champions will become an annual affair.

Soccer NSW chief Peter Gray last October flew to Fiji to set up this event with the Fiji FA.

The Eagles' first clash against the Fijians will be today (February 3) with the second game set down for Thursday (February 5).

The NSW Champions however have been severely weakened by the loss of four of their stars who went across to link up with Ericsson League clubs during the off-season.

Gone are skipper and centre-back George Souris (Wollongong City), industrious 'screener' David Huxley (Wollongong City), magical midfielder Gabriel Mendez (Marconi) and ace-goalscorer Steve Karavatakis (Sydney Olympic).

Utjesenovic's travelling squad of 15 is:

Goalkeepers: Jason Holmes and Darren Viskovic.

Defenders: Stefan Jee, Mark Reveley, Sasha Utjesenovic, Andrew Dowling, Paul Donnelly, Paul O'Grady.

Midfielders: Saso Boskovski, Mauricio Islas, David Thomas, Tony Mittiga, Brett Kinnimont.

Strikers: Malcolm Meilak, Saso Petrovski.

***

Dougie Utjesenovic: Parramatta Eagles' champion coach.

Marconi's Youth squad of 15 members under coach Lee Sterry, fly out on Thursday night bound for Italy to participate in the historical 50th Viareggio Tournament.

The squad selected is: Craig Potts, Ivan Necevski,

Lee Sterrey: Marconi's youth coach for Viareggio Tournament.

Michael Galluzzo, Daniel Ucchino, Buddy Farah, Victor Tomasevic, Michael Kladis, Christian Care, Andrew Daniele, Mauro Van Cuylenberg, Fernando Pellegrino, Mark Hagger, Michael Cunico, Jane Talcevski and Luke Tomich.

***

SOCCER AUSTRALIA last Sunday called an understandably poorly attended, at very short notice, Media Conference at lunchtime in Sydney to discuss national coach Terry Venables' coaching future.

S.A. Chairman David Hill announced that the national body still wanted Venables to extend his contract up to, and including the 2002 World Cup campaign.

Terry Venables: Australia's national coach.

Venables, whose present contract expires this July, stated: "Once something is put to me I can decide my position. There's no doubt David Hill would like me to stay. There's no doubt I'd like to stay.

"Whether it is a reality is another point."

***

SBS-TV's Sports producer/presenter Les Murray of our Super Soccer Channel, advised 'Good Oil' that his Network will bring coverage of all of Australia's three games in the coming 'World Soccer Series' against 1998 World Cup qualified nations, Chile, South Korea and Japan.

Les stated this week to 'Good Oil': "Last year's competition saw Australia sweep aside Norway, South Korea and New Zealand with style and confidence to secure the title.

"Undoubtedly Asia's most successful World Cup nation is South Korea having qualified for their fourth consecutive World Finals".

The polished presenter Murray concluded: "Japan has now secured a place in the World Cup Finals for the first time in its history. When the Japanese toured Australia in 1996 they defeated Australia 1-4 before going down 3-0 in the return leg."

Australia's first match, this Saturday, (February 7) against Chile in Melbourne, will be covered live to all centres except Melbourne, Darwin and Perth.

The coverage for this match will be screened as follows: Qld-7pm to 9pm, S. Australia-7.30pm to 9.30pm, NSW, ACT, Victoria country, Perth, Darwin-8pm to 10pm and for Melbourne-10pm-midnight.

Les Murray: SBS TV's producer/presenter.

A full replay to all centres will be screened on Sunday at 12.30pm (12pm for South Australia).

For the Australia's second match against South Korea tomorrow week (Wednesday February11), there will be a delayed coverage to all centres starting at 10pm to midnight, (S.A.-9.30pm).

Australia's last match versus Japan on Sunday week (February 15) coverage will be Live to all centres except Adelaide, Darwin, Perth.

The screening times for this last match are: Qld-7pm to 9pm, S.A.-country 7.30pm to 9.30pm, NSW, Vic, ACT, Perth, Darwin 8pm to 10pm, and finally in Adelaide a delayed screening between 10pm and midnight..

***

THE NSW SOCCER FEDERATION's Super League kicks off its 'Pre-Season Cup' this Saturday and Sunday with Round One (see Cup match fixture advert on Page 5.

Kicking off the Cup sees the two newly promoted teams into the Super League (Ryde City and Eastern Suburbs) who clash with the Central Coast and Macarthur Rams respectively this Saturday night.

The remaining four Cup matches will be played on Sunday.

The Cup format is two Groups (North and South), each with six teams. Each Group will play preliminary rounds with each team playing each other just once.

North: Bankstown City Lions, Blacktown City Demons, Bonnyrigg White Eagles, Central Coast, Parramatta Eagles and Ryde City.

South: Canterbury Marrickville, Eastern Suburbs, Leichhardt Tigers, Macarthur Rams, St George Saints and Sutherland.

The top two of each Group progress into the semis with the respective winners clashing in the Cup Final which is likely to be staged on Saturday, March 7.

Details each week will be advertised in ABSW.

***

Paul Trimboli, South Melbourne's goalscoring and consistent match-winning skipper, is rapidly heading up the goalscoring charts.

Having yet nailed in two more last Sunday in Souths' away 3-1 win over Sydney Olympic, 'Trimmers' has now knocked in 10 goals.

This most gifted player (for the past decade) not only scores goals but is a wonderful creator. Can easily be converted to playmaker if you like.

Why on earth then was Trimboli never used, (not even for one single minute), in Australia's five games during the Confederations Cup in Saudi Arabia late last year?

Maybe now with all our Euro-based players unavailable for Australia's three matches against Chile, South Korea and Japan in the World Series starting on the 11th of this month we may see Trimboli in action for the 'Green and Gold'...maybe?

The World Series kicking off next week is NOT a tournament culminating in a Final. Just three straight matches.

Paul Trimboli: Will he play in the World Series?

***

Clayton Zane, Newcastle Breakers' gangling skilled goalscorer has already been targeted by three clubs for next season.

Northern Spirit is heading the chase closely followed by another Sydney club.

***

Lou Hristodoulou, after nine consecutive years in the Greek first division with powerful club Panathinaikos, has returned to Australia (Adelaide in fact) and was immediately signed up by the Adelaide Sharks (his original club) last week.

Shark officials stated that Lou's wealth of experience in Europe will prove most invaluable to their NSL squad.

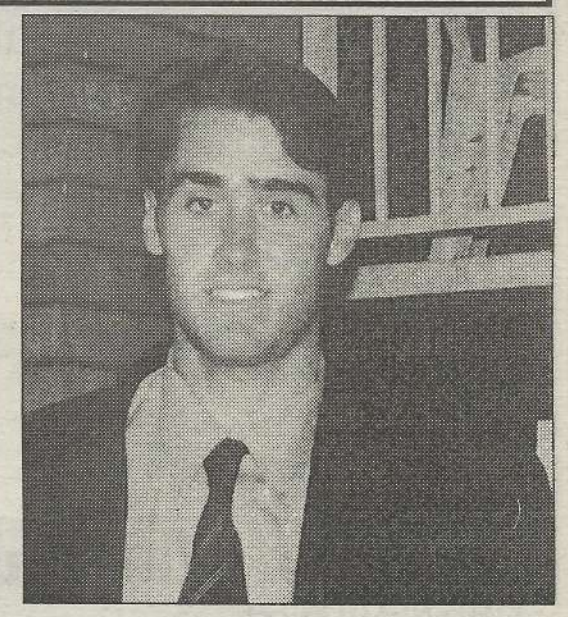
The 30 year old tough tackling former international midfielder represented Australia in two World Youth Championships.

Sharks coach Adrian Santrac rushed Hristodoulou into his line-up last weekend but the star midfielder was unable to lift his team to prevent Canberra Cosmos from scoring a narrow 1-0 win on a muddy 'wicket' to take all three league points at Seiffert Oval, Canberra.

***

Sydney United last Wednesday announced the sudden resignation of its General Manager, Mr John Denison, who had joined the Club last July from Wollongong City.

Mr Stephen Gallagher, United's former Sponsorship manager now takes over that position.



Clayton Zane: Being chased by three clubs.

GIPPSLAND FALCONS' General manager, Ray McCluskey also announced his resignation from his position, due to personal reasons.

***

Lou Hristodoulou: Back with the Sharks after nine years.

PLAY WITH BRAZIL

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BARGAIN BASEMENT

Soccer Australia have published the following list of players who become free agents as of June 17, 1998 and, under the following legislation, the clubs which can command a compensation fee (subject to players not signing new club contracts of course).

ADELAIDE CITY

COMPENSATION FEE
Angelo Costanzo, Travis Dodd, Brad Hassell, Dino Mennillo, Nick Sabljak, Ross Verschoor.

FREE AGENTS
Michael Brooks, Damian Mori, Milan Ivanovic, **Alex Tobin.**

ADELAIDE SHARKS

COMPENSATION FEE
Corey Artone, Richard Alagich, Pablo Cardozo, Ulises Castro, **Nathan Day,** Swaif Khain, Reshat Mezensorf, Jamie Perin, Frank Tibaldi, Nathan Wildy.

FREE AGENTS
Andrew Borghetto, Branko Milosevic, Frank Mikuletic, Robbie Slager.

BRISBANE STRIKERS

COMPENSATION FEE
Clint Bolton, Reece Tollenaere.

FREE AGENTS
Rodney Brown, Mark Battistin, Andrew Brayshaw, Gary Blackford, **Troy Cranney,** Sean Cranney, Bradley Ditton, Glen Gwynne, Nick Meredith, Gary Phillips, Graham Ross.

CANBERRA COSMOS

COMPENSATION FEE
Damien Brown, Adrian Dowling, Thomas Haythornthwaite, **Ante Moric,** David Milin, Ilija Prenzoski, Andrew Ravanello, Barney Smith, Ivan Zelic.

FREE AGENTS
James Baxter, Anthony Giannasca, Norman Kelly, Tony Lemazina, Marko Perinovic, Toplica Popovich, Lindsay Wilson.

CARLTON

COMPENSATION FEE
Dusko Delic, Alexander Josifovski, Ivica Klarica, Marco Maisano, John Markovski, Jovanco Novacevski, Pir Serdar, Adam Pongho, Ace Stojevski, Steve Tilovski, Nick Tolios.

FREE AGENTS
Sean Douglas, **Alan Hunter.**

GIPPSLAND FALCONS

COMPENSATION FEE
Mark Foy, Jim Kourtis, John McEvoy, Levent Osman, Vojtek Repetowski, **Tony Sekulic,** Adrian Savage, Joseph Tricarico, Claudio Canosa, Hugo Giminez, Brian MacNichol, Douglas Marcina.

MARCONI FAIRFIELD

COMPENSATION FEE
Michael Cunico, Christian Care, Andrew Danielle, Robert Debrincat, Buddy Farah, Michael Galluzzo, Scott Jeffers, Peter Krljar, Anthony Montelone, Mark Racker, Luke Tomich, Daniel Ucchino, Mauro Van Cuylenberg.

FREE AGENTS
Francis Awaritefe, Luke Casserly, Michael Gibson, Terry Palapanis.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

COMPENSATION FEE
Adrian Cervinski, Ante Kovacevic.

FREE AGENTS
Ross Greer, **Andrew Marth.**

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS

COMPENSATION FEE
M. Austin, L. Baker, A. Bauer, J. Paul Bourke, S. Edwards, J. Gibson, S. Groen, M. Gates, D. Hodgson, P. Juchniewicz, J. Jackson, L. Knott, B. Lane, M. Lowe, S. Lupton, T. McManus, L. McGuire, C. Mansley, J. Maguire, M. Nicholson, G. Owens, P. Ritchie, **B. Swancott,** M. Sloane, C. Tanchevski, H. Timmins, G. Vitullo, M. Williams, D. West, D. Willis, C. Zane.

FREE AGENTS
Jason Bennett, Robert Ironside.

PERTH GLORY

COMPENSATION FEE
Vinko Buljubasic, Anthony Carbone, Daniel Hay, Douglas Ithier, Vincent Matassa.

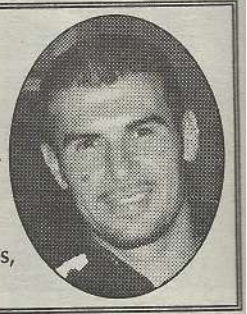
FREE AGENTS
Anthony Franken, **Paul McVittie,** Tommy Maras, Gareth Naven, Craig Naven, Peter Vukmirovic.

SOUTH MELBOURNE

COMPENSATION FEE
Frank Catalano, Alex Efstathiou, George Goutzoulis, Steve Iosifidis, Chris Jones, Robert Liparoti, John Tambouris.

FREE AGENTS
John Anastasiadis, **Fausto De Amicis.**

SYDNEY UNITED



COMPENSATION FEE
Robert Angievski, Jacob Burns, Joe Barilla, Ivan Bazina, Zeljko Kalac, Daniel Kukucka, John Perosh, Dominic Usulj, Joe Vrkic.

FREE AGENTS
Peter Bennett, Peter Blazincic, Robert Hooker, Tony Krslovic, Velimir Kupresak, David Mitchell, Stuart Munro, Steve Refenes, **Abbas Saad.**

UTS OLYMPIC

COMPENSATION FEE
Trinity Allen, Kain Rastall.

FREE AGENTS
Scott Baillie, Adam Ciantar, **Peter Tsekenis.**

WOLLONGONG CITY

COMPENSATION FEE
Adam Brodbeck, Alvin Ceccoli, **Sasho Dimoski,** Graeme Goodfellow, Neill Harlock, Colin Luff, Kane Maccabei, Tony Perinich, Michael Reda, Noel Spencer.

FREE AGENTS
Jason Connolly, Brett Hughes, Nick Josevski, Sonny Sevin.

AROUND THE CLUBS

Illawarra News

PERINICH BACK TO BEST

By Phil Murphy

Two years ago Tony Perinich was the striker every one was talking about.

After his dynamic performance in Wolves' last home game against Melbourne Knights (he was voted Man-of-the-Match by SBS TV) this was the clearest indication yet that the man with the wild hair hair and rock star looks is back, and back at just the right time for the Wolves and their run to the Finals.

Injuries have hampered his progress in these last few seasons, and after two operations, he made a tentative start to this campaign.

Furthermore with competition in the squad very tough, and the signing later of brilliant Fijian Esala Masi and the goals of Scott Chipperfield, it was hard for Perinich to make it into Nick Theodorakopoulos' first eleven.

"Obviously I would like to score more goals but I have been very happy with my form — the goals will come," predicted Perinich.

"I have felt that things are coming together gradually and now I believe I am back at my best. The pace is back and I am finding it easier to get past defenders than earlier in the season. When the sharpness is there it makes it much easier to be effective.

"Apart from my fitness, I have worked on my attitude to the game and that has been important."

Tony Perinich is poised for another big game in front of the Brandon Park faithful when the league resumes in two weeks, when the Wolves are home to traditional rivals Sydney Olympic, in what is a 'must win' game for both sides.

Perinich feels that if the Wolves can grab the points from this crucial game then the play-offs are a good chance this year, and given that the Wolves have a relatively easy run in to the Finals (four of their last six games are at home), this is not just a dream, but a distinct possibility.

"This has been a very important factor for us this season, the fact that our supporters have been great and we have been pulling such great crowds. The game against Olympic could draw our best attendance of the year."

Wollongong's recent win against the Knights was their sixth successive home win, and in those games they have scored 22 and conceded only two!

So it is little wonder that the players are so keen to make the play-offs, given that they can play at least one game at home in front of their own fanatical supporters. And what an attendance a Finals game could pull at Brandon Park.

Tony Perinich: The skilful forward is back!

DAIRY FARMERS & WOLVES IN ROO BALL SUCCESS

The Wolves are to be congratulated for staging Roo Ball (U/10) games this season.

They appear to be one of just a few clubs to organise such games (sponsored by Dairy Farmers). Local teams have been playing in this junior competition all year, and the second semi-final has been set down prior to the kick-off of the Wolves/Olympic tussle.

In the first semi Dapto were successful over a gallant Unanderra.

THE WOLF FLIES IN

Can Wolves fly? Apparently they can and you can see this for yourself at the Wolves/Olympic showdown, when the ever-popular Wolves mascot, the Wolf, will arrive at Brandon Park and drop onto the playing surface by parachute.

And don't forget the 'Wolf chase', one of the most popular half-time kids' promotions the club has had, where cash can be won for catching the Wolf.

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VICTORIA UPDATE

By Dwyght Tuffnell

CARLTON LET 'BLOCKHEAD' GO

The Blues have given its captain Alan Hunter a free transfer after the former Socceroo had found it difficult to break his way into the first eleven.

Hunter moved to Melbourne from Brisbane Strikers but had been injured in pre-season and didn't play until November.

He has just three weeks to find a new club before the transfer deadline closes.

New Zealand international Sean Douglas moves up from vice-captain to take over the skipper's armband.

Douglas, who has been in terrific form this season, was also included in the New Zealand squad along with team-mate Mark Atkinson for upcoming games against Chile and South Korea. Congratulations.

Also Carlton have signed exciting young midfielder Mark Bresciano from Bulleen Inter Kings.

Bresciano, 17, had been at the AIS playing in the National Youth League Northern Division until the call-up from Carlton.

He starred with Bulleen in last season's Victorian Premier League, scoring five goals out of midfield and only playing less than half the season.

Young Bresciano made his debut against Cosmos recently, playing well and setting up new Socceroo John Markovski's goal in the 2-0 win.

POSTECOGLOU'S MILESTONE

Coach Ange Postecoglou celebrated his 50th game in charge of South Melbourne when they defeated Newcastle Breakers at home two weeks ago.

Postecoglou has been delighted with the way things have turned around for the club since he took over.

"When I took over the team they had lost fifteen games and finished eighth," he said.

"Last week for us was a fantastic week with five players called up to the national squad and to hit the top of the table within 18 months, it's a credit to everyone at the club."

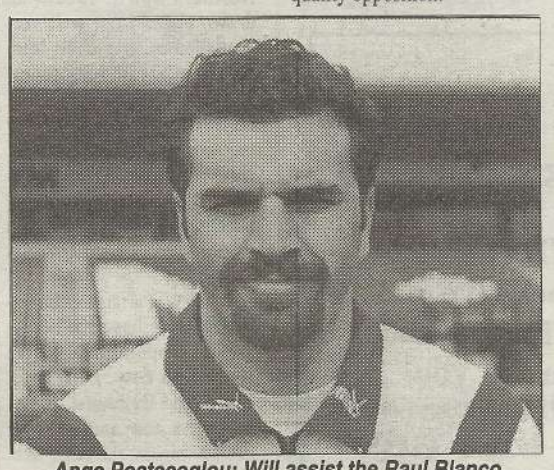
Things are certainly going well for Postecoglou at the moment. As well as being in charge of the team on top of the ladder, he last week assisted Olympic coach Raul Blanco at the Olyroo camp in Canberra.

Postecoglou, however, expects to have a squad of fully fit players when the Ericsson Cup resumes from the break.

He believes that the club hasn't been getting some of the credit it deserves and said: "I keep hearing that all these other clubs are doing well and how professional they are and how we tend to get away with things and are disappointing in areas.

"Hopefully now we'll get some of the accolades rather than people saying 'Gee, that was disappointing'.

"I don't know what people expect, I'm happy with the way we've gone about things this year and as a club I'm really happy the way it's progressing."



Ange Postecoglou: Will assist the Raul Blanco coached Olyroos.

KNIGHTS PLAY NAGOYA

Knights' deferred game against Adelaide City has been set down for Wednesday March 4 at Knights Stadium. Kick-off will be 7.30 pm.

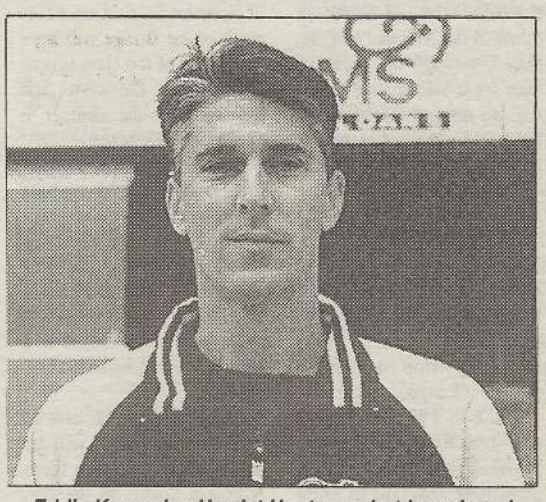
The Knights will also be playing against Japanese J-League team Nagoya Grampus 8 at Knights Stadium on Thursday February 26. Kick-off is at 8pm.

Grampus 8, former club of English great Gary Lineker, were looking for a national league team to play whilst in Australia and the Knights jumped at the opportunity of playing against some real quality opposition.

Meanwhile injuries and suspensions have ravaged the Knights this season but they are hoping to have a nearly fully fit squad after the break for the Socceroo games.

Alan Davidson is recovering from his hamstring injury and had been training lightly but is only about 40% fit at the moment.

The Knights have set down the Grampus 8 match as a target for Adrian Cervinski to make his return from an injury riddled year.



Eddie Krncevic: Has let Hunter go but has signed young Mark Bresciano.

NSW Soccer Federation

PRE-SEASON CUP - ROUND 1

Saturday, February 7
(N) Central Coast vs Ryde City
— Pluim Park, 7pm
(S) Macarthur Rams vs Eastern Suburbs
— Lynwood Park, 7pm
Sunday, February 8
(N) Blacktown Demons vs Parramatta Eagles
— Gabbie Stadium, 7pm
(N) Bankstown City vs Bonnyrigg W.E.
— Jensen Park, 5pm
(S) Sutherland Sharks vs Canterbury M'ville
— Henson Park, 5pm
(S) St. George Saints vs Leichhardt Tigers
— St George Stadium, 7pm
***(N) North group, (S) South group**
Under 21s & 18s fixtures at all venues prior to First Grade

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The Spirit of Co-Operation

Dear Sir,

Amid all the well-deserved hype and hoopla surrounding the admission of Northern Spirit to the National League, may I, through the pages of your most informative publication, remind followers of the 'real football' that there is a soccer team of the highest calibre already operating north of the Harbour Bridge.

The club is Ryde City. This year after two successive Division One championships, Ryde City are now ready to show what they can do in the highest division in NSW — the Super League.

Back in 1993 Ryde City (or North Ryde as they were known) embarked on an ambitious program to bring the highest quality of soccer to the area.

This was not achieved with the help of an open cheque book but with dedication and vision.

With the imminent arrival of Northern Spirit Soccer fans north of the Bridge will have 12 months of top class action: Ryde City in the winter and the 'Spirit' in the summer. It doesn't get any better.

Both seasons will complement each other by running alternatively.

There will always be room for a team with ambition, flair and a dream to succeed. The Perth Glory have proved it and I have no doubt the new boys on the block can do likewise.

You can be sure that all followers of Soccer will get behind them and wish them, Northern Spirit, all the very best.

Mike Cornish
Press/Publicity Officer
Ryde City Soccer Club.

PUMAS PLAY WORLD CUP FINALISTS

Two friendly matches will be played by Sydney United against international opposition in February.

The first match will see United play the South Korean national side on Sunday February 15, at the Sydney United Sports Complex, Edensor Park.

This is closely followed by the only opportunity to see Japan in NSW, as they have also pencilled in a game for Thursday, February 19 at the same venue against the Pumas.

Kick-off times and venues will be confirmed later this week. With such quality opposition (both nations will be in France come July of this year for the biggest show on earth) these will be top class matches and a great opportunity to see top Aussie players and Asian stars in the flesh.

Meanwhile in less happy news, Sydney United are still without inspirational front man and manager Dave Mitchell, who remains unfit because of a torn medial ligament to his left knee.

SYDNEY UNITED SOCCER CLUB

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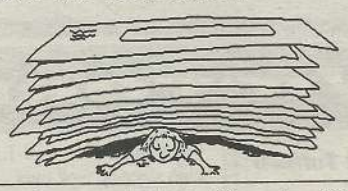
Letters to the Editor

Have your say on any soccer issue in the world. Preference will be given to short letters. Include daytime phone number for verification.



The Editor,
Australian & British Soccer Weekly
PO BOX 155,
Marrickville
NSW 2204
Fax: (02) 9550-9332

Short letters of about 400 words will be given preference in this column.

The opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect those of this newspaper

Star Letter

NSL PREDICTABILITY

Dear Sir,

There does seem to be an air of predictability creeping into our National League competition as once again Newcastle and Canberra struggle in the bottom two places. With Soccer Australia being silent on its management plans for the league, either short or long-term, not for the first time must I agree with Carlton's Jack Reilly and his statement in the press recently calling for a promotion and relegation system to urgently stimulate public interest, which could very easily wane until our next tilt at a World Cup Finals berth in 2002.

Inevitably, the continued lack of any success at these two clubs and, perhaps Gippsland Falcons, will result in a fall in attendances at venues where they are participating. Therefore, subject to proper financial obligations, an announcement by SA at this time, for genuine commitment in supporting these clubs continued participation in the league is essential. This would give these clubs the green light to plan for the future and would be of considerable comfort for those in these regions who have doggedly supported the game over the past few years.

Whether the entry next season of Sydney based Northern Spirit means an unwieldy 15 team competition, eventually the NSL will have to comprise of two divisions, preferably with 12 clubs in each, in competing in our aggressive and expanding sporting market. Such a move would certainly stimulate both the players and coaches of the clubs, who over recent years have had by mid-season nothing to play for other than pride.

At the same time, promotion and relegation between the divisions would arrest the fall in attendances for those less successful clubs.

Against such an ideal, SA and other critics may argue that expansion to 24 clubs in two divisions would only result in the downturn of the quality of play. A converse view is that in the larger states of NSW and Victoria, registration of young players is at a high level and increasing each year.

If all this emerging new talent had a wider net for their ambitions in the game, our code would not have the alarming drop-out rate of players in their late teens and early twenties, disillusioned that there are very limited stepping stones between the local state leagues of varying levels and our Ericsson Cup clubs.

Teams participating in a newly formed Second Division should initially come from NSW and Victoria, if only to minimise travel and other administrative costs. Ideally, the nine new entrants, four from NSW and the remainder from Victoria, in balancing regional membership with the inclusion of Northern Spirit, should be drawn either from well credentialled existing clubs from the formation of consortiums or mergers. At first, the criteria for entrants ought not to be too high. Potential attendance figures should be aimed at 1500-2000, but with a proper aggressive marketing program supporting a Second Division venture.

In NSW, Parramatta Eagles undoubtedly have the necessary credentials, with Blacktown City, Leichhardt Tigers and Bathhurst, representing a new and growing country region, the other likely contenders.

In Victoria, the possible candidates are not so lucid. An Eastern Suburbs consortium is of paramount importance — it being a virtually untapped area — with the other candidates likely to be drawn from solid performers such as Altona Magic, Port Melbourne, a combined Green Gully-Sunshine, Bulleen or even consortiums from Geelong or the Mornington Peninsula, both having high population areas.

The advantages of two divisions, with a promotion/relegation set-up, are many fold. Ours would be the only football code in Australia with such a system, it would create a platform to conduct a proper knockout cup competition, with no 'byes', and with only 22 league matches there would be little need for a cancellation of games that disrupt the competition and a loss of revenue for the affected clubs, allowing for an increasing number of international matches and promoting our game to audiences in previously untapped areas.

While I do have pen to paper, two other suggestions for Soccer Australia.

1/ I agree with Les Murray and Eddie Krncevic that the reserves bench be increased by at least one player to accommodate a reserve goalkeeper and,

2/ Player shirt 'naming and numbering' be made compulsory for ALL NSL clubs for the benefit of spectators, TV viewers and, hopefully in the near future, national radio broadcasters.

P. Sannino
Seaford, Vic.

Editor's note:

It is not customary to print a letter of this size in full, but this is an exception to that rule. Some flaws can be seen in the arguments, although well thought out. The call for promotion/relegation and the adoption of 'first past the post' and cup competitions is nothing new but you have expressed the sentiment beautifully here. It will be interesting to see if any other of our readers agree with your thoughts.

NNSW NEWS

CLARKE RESIGNS FROM GM ROLE

The Breakers have suffered a body blow with the news that General Manager Pat Clarke has resigned.

Clarke's diligent efforts in 1994 allowed the club to retire some of its debt and provide the basis for a return to the big league.

Clarke believes it is time to move and stated to ABSW that: "It was very difficult in the first two years and I now believe that the club has a solid financial position."

Nevertheless the tireless Clarke will keep his shares in the club and will work with the Austral Sports Club until his future is decided.

Bill Collins, the Breakers Chairman, will temporarily fill in for the outgoing Clarke until a new person is found. "It think he (Clarke) has done a great job and now he wants to spend more time with his family," Collins noted.

A decision about the sale of the club would also be looked at in "the near future," he added.

"There will also be money allocated to improve the quality of the side," concluded Collins.

Following the Optus Four Nations tournament the Breakers resume their season by making the trek across the Nullabor to play Perth Glory, the new club of former Breakers star, and Socceroo, Troy Halpin

Troy Halpin: Will play against Newcastle when the league resumes.

CENTRAL COAST'S INTERNATIONAL STAR

The Central Coast has long been a Soccer hot bed. Now one of its best players, Andrew Clark, is making his mark overseas and on the international stage.

Clark's form has been so good that he has been rewarded with a spot in Hong Kong's side to take on Nigeria, Chile and Iran in the Carlsberg Cup at Hong the Stadium.

The tournament is designed as preparation France 98 for the three visiting teams.

The Hong Kong side is made up of the best players in the Hong Kong domestic league (irrespective of their nationality).

Clark, 23, was in the starting line-up for the game against the highly rated Chileans, a match won 3-1 by the locals (see story on page 23).

Clark has been in former British colony since August last year, and made an immediate impression, being made captain and holding down a regular spot in this improving league. He is playing Soccer everyday and has even attracted the attention of some of the bigger clubs

His father Bob has been quoted as saying that it is a "great achievement ... giving him the chance to play against some of the world's best teams and players."

The player was first noticed playing for up-and-coming club Central Coast Coasties in the NSW Super League. He is a defender and midfielder with plenty of promise.

Well done Andrew, you are a credit to the Central Coast.

In other news the highly respected NNSW Director of Coaching, Ken Kaiser, will be at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra this week, assisting National Director of Coaching Jim Selby to conduct a Level Three High Performance Coaching Clinic.

David Lowe: Will be attending the coaching clinic at the AIS. Perhaps one day he will be coaching in the NSL?

One of the players attempting to gain this coaching level will be none other than David Lowe, who was one of the most highly regarded players in the NSL.

Well done 'Lowey' and good luck.

NORTHERN N.S.W SOCCER FEDERATION

Rising Stars

National Youth League Rd 18

By Roy Hay

Southern Division

Bulleen Inter Kings started Round 18 with a one-nil win over Gippsland Falcons at the Veneto Club. Daniel Inchincolli's goal was all that separated the teams after a thoroughly entertaining and closely fought match.

It was a similar story at Kingston Heath where Bentleigh Greens beat South Melbourne by a Steve Gogos goal.

Meanwhile over at Melbourne Knights there was a curious match in which the home team scored fifteen goals without reply from an Altona Magic side that had several players called up to play in the Victorian Premier League.

The procession began in the ninth minute when Adis Kablar fired home a cut back from the byline. Then Damon Collina did likewise on 16, John Kalabric had a free header from a cross by Ivan Razov, Collina bundled a short range effort into the net and Steve Vugdelja put Kablar through for number five shortly after the interval.

Damon Collina sprung the offside trap for the sixth goal, Kablar's short-range header and John Kalabric's simple finish preceded a spectacular overhead kick by Daniel Radosevic.

Kalabric added two and Radosevic gained his second when Damon Collina's shot came back of the cross bar.

The Magic had one free-kick in a dangerous position but Vanco Bosevski's shot flew over the bar. Michael Bosevski got in on the act for the Knights with a shot from an angle, Adis Kablar scored his fourth and Daniel Radosevic had the most spectacular long shot, but a deflection denied him his hat-trick.

The match between South Melbourne Rockets and Carlton at Bob Jane Stadium was not played. It will be the subject of a referee's report.

Northern Division

High scoring affairs were not the sole domain of the South when Newcastle Breakers overwhelmed Wollongong City by eight goals to one at Topper Stadium on Friday night.

Two hat-tricks, one by David Hodgson in 5, 65 and 73 minutes and the other by Leonardo Langone in 2, 50 and 70 minutes were the highlights from the Newcastle point of view.

The other goals were by Liam McGuire on 85 minutes and an own goal. Denis Jurjevic scored the consolation goal for the Wolves on the hour.

It was wet, humid and difficult at Suncorp on Saturday but the Queensland Academy and Sydney United triumphed over the conditions to produce a great game which ended three-two to United. Andrew Packer and Royce Brownlie scored for QAS and Mark Rudan and Robert Angievski for United.

The winner came very late from former AIS sharpshooter Mile Sterjovski (pictured right).

New South Wales Institute of Sport went down to Marconi Fairfield by five goals to one. Steve Dimitrievski put the Institute in front from the penalty spot after fifteen minutes, but Joe Bruni equalised on the half-hour with the first goal of his hat-trick. Fernando Pellegrino made it two five minutes later, but the game was still even until more than an hour had been played when Paul Souris scored a third for Marconi.

Bruni completed his hat-trick with goals in 85 and 89 minutes as the youngsters from the Institute ran out of legs after their tough recent program (five players are in the Joeys squad and were just back from camp), however the talent of Daniel Watkins, Robert Petrovski and Paul Wearne shone through.

The AIS beat Marconi Colts by two goals to one with all the goals coming in the opening twenty minutes. Chris Tanchevski and Tommy Bajurin scored in 5 and 14 minutes as the AIS threatened to run away with the game, but the prolific Mark Hagger scored in 19 and despite plenty of chances for both sides that is how it ended.

In another high scoring affair UTS Olympic beat its Colts team by eight goals to one. Nick Carle scored a hat-trick and there were doubles by Jim Bakis and Kevork Gulesserian.

Walter Ardone added one and there was a good goal by Philip Perzac for the Colts.

SOUTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

Friday 30 January

Bulleen Inter Kings	1	Gippsland Falcons	0
Inchincolli			
Bentleigh Greens	1	South Melbourne	0
Gogos			

Sunday 1 February

Albury Wodonga	3	Heidelberg United	1
Ardern, Tudor, Griffiths		Yassan	
Melbourne Knights	15	Altona Magic	0
Kablar 4, Kalabric 4, Collina 3, Radosevic 2, og 2			

*South Melbourne Rockets and Carlton game was not played and VIS had a bye

NORTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

Friday 30 January

N'castle Breakers	8	Wollongong City	1
Hodgson 3, Langoni 3, McGuire, og		Jurjevic	

Saturday 31 January

NSWIS	1	Marconi Fairfield	5
Dimitrievski		Bruni 3, Souris, Pellegrino	
AIS	2	Marconi Fairfield Colts	1
Tanchevski, Bajuri		Hagger	
QAS	2	Sydney United	3
Packer, Brownlie		Rudan, Angievski, Sterjovski	

Sunday 1 February

UTS Olympic	8	UTS Olympic Colts	1
Carle 3, Guleserrian 2, Bakis 2, Ardone		Perzac	

Sydney United Colts and ACTAS had byes

SOUTHERN DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mel Knights	15	13	0	2	66	15	39
Carlton	12	11	0	1	27	6	33
Gippsland	14	9	2	3	27	14	29
VIS	13	7	3	3	33	16	24
Bulleen	14	7	2	5	24	19	23
Bentleigh	15	5	2	8	17	30	17
Heidelberg	14	4	2	8	16	34	14
Albury	14	4	1	9	18	21	13
Altona	14	3	2	9	18	50	11
South Mel	13	2	3	8	22	22	9
S M Rockets	12	1	1	10	11	52	4

NORTHERN DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AIS	15	11	2	2	61	13	35
Olympic	15	9	3	3	50	22	30
W'gong	16	8	3	5	32	31	27
Sydney Utd	15	6	6	3	40	29	24
Marconi	15	7	2	6	28	28	23
QAS	15	6	4	5	34	21	22
Newcastle	15	5	5	5	35	31	20
Mar Colts	15	6	2	7	24	36	20
ACTAS	15	5	4	6	21	42	19
Oly Colts	16	3	3	10	23	56	12
SU Colts	14	3	2	9	16	37	11
NSWIS	16	2	4	10	19	37	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Southern Division

Adis Kablar	Melbourne Knights	13
John Kalabric	Melbourne Knights	12
Zoran Petrevski	VIS	12
Jovan Novacevski	Carlton	9
Festim Zekiri	Melbourne Knights	7

Northern Division

Mile Sterjovski	AIS/Sydney United	23
Mark Hagger	Marconi Fairfield Colts	17
Marc Bresciano	AIS	9
Tony Krslovic	Sydney United Colts	8

Round 19 Fixtures

Southern Division

Saturday 21 February
Albury Wodonga v South Melbourne Rockets
(4pm, Diamond Park)

Sunday 22 February
Gippsland Falcons v Heidelberg United
(3.30pm, Falcons Park)
South Melbourne v Bulleen Inter
(3.30pm, Bob Jane Stadium)

Monday 23 February
Carlton v VIS
(5.30pm, Optus Oval)

Bentleigh Greens, Altona Magic and Melbourne Knights all have byes.

Northern Division

Friday 20 February
Sydney United v Sydney United Colts
(5pm, Parramatta Stadium)

Saturday 21 February
UTS Olympic Colts v Marconi Fairfield
(4pm, Belmore Park)
AIS v ACTAS
(7pm, AIS Soccer fields)

Sunday 22 February
Wollongong City v UTS Olympic
(4pm, Brandon Park)
Marconi Fairfield Colts v QAS
(5pm, Marconi Stadium)

NSWIS and Newcastle Breakers have byes.

Please note that because of international commitments the youth league is in recess till February 20.

Mile Sterjovski: Came back to the NYL to score yet another goal.

ERICSSON CUP Match Reports

TERRIFIC TRIMBOLI TERRORISES OLYMPIC

SYDNEY OLYMPIC .....1 SOUTH MELBOURNE 3

By John Economos

Paul Trimboli, with another classy and intelligent display (yet again), plus a brace of goals, laid the solid foundations for South Melbourne's 1-3 win over a hapless Sydney Olympic last Sunday night at the Belmore Sports Ground.

With Souths surprisingly trailing Olympic 1-0 after just 10 minutes, the magnificent Trimboli unfolded a real 'Mark Taylor innings' to steer his side back into a most deserving win.

Trimboli, almost unquestionably Australia's most intelligent player over the last decade, and certainly most gifted, not only scored two goals but was a constant headache to all Olympic defenders, plus instigated Souths' other goal as a bonus, scored by international right wingback Goran Lozanovski.

Olympic shocked the League leaders as early as the 10th minute when striker Norman Tome drew first blood volleying a lovely cross from teenage left midfielder Leon Carle deep into the target.

Ten minutes later Trimboli punched a delightful through-ball into Olympic's box for the racing midfielder Billy Damianos, but the latter's delicate chip over the advancing Olympic goalkeeper Bobby Catlin cleared the horizontal.

But 'Trimmers' was not finished. In the 24th minute he 'balanced the books' for Souths by side-footing into the net an excellent flat cross fired in from the right wing by, of all people, centre-back Steve Iosifidis.

Five minutes before 'drinks' Trimboli again exploded into action as left back Fausto DeAmicis twisted past two defenders up the left, crossed into the box for the alert and eager Trimboli whose first time blast although well on target, was cleared off the line by centre-back Paul Carter. The rebound was promptly drilled back hard and low into the target by Lozanovski to lift Souths into a 1-2 lead at the break.

Six minutes into the second 'innings' an Eric Hristodoulou chip into Souths' box saw Olympic's lanky midfielder Ante Juric explode a diving header, but he was denied a goal by an excellent save from international goalkeeper Michael Petkovic.

Trimboli in the 70th minute broke into the clear but his through-ball to substitute Kiwi striker Vaughan Coveny was blasted into Bobby Catlin's grateful gloves.

Just seconds later Trimboli trebled Souths' scoreline and cemented all three points by elegantly side-footing a Lozanovski pass into Sydney Olympic's net.

Souths' industrious midfield trio of Billy Damianos, David Clarkson and Steve Panopoulos were always more mobile, unified and hungrier than their counterparts whilst Olympic's young left midfielder Leon Carle showed excellent vision, firing two magnificent through balls, one that yielded Tome's goal.

Paul Trimboli: Another brilliant performance by the Aussie soccer legend.

Whilst stripping for a well-deserved shower, the ever-pleasant and humble Trimboli stated to ABSW: "I could have had a few tonight. It's still a lot of fun scoring for me as all the lads put in some really great moves with nice short passes. The boys are all playing well."

Souths' youngest coach in the Ericsson League, Ange Postecoglou, 32, later evaluated: "Overall it wasn't a bad result for us as our midfield worked hard. I was happy even though we were a little sloppy in the first 20 minutes where we took too many risks at the back and could have been punished for it.

"But as time went on we got stronger and solid were all over the pitch."

An unhappy Olympic coach Geoff Harcombe lamented: "They (Souths) have a lot more experience than us. Man for man all over the park they are a class above us. They are comfortable on the ball in all departments.

But had we taken the one or two chances early in the match, who knows what it could have ended up as."

OLYMPIC: Catlin, Rastall, Barbalace, Carter, Augerinos (Jomaa 46), Emerton, Hristodoulou (Rodrigues 75), Juric, L. Carle, Tome, Bayhan (Baillie 64).

SOUTH: Petkovic, Lozanovski (Catalano 88), Baser, Orlic, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Damianos (Liparoti 85), Clarkson, Panopoulos, Trimboli, Boutsianis (Coveny 64).

SCORERS
Olympic: Tome 10
Souths: Trimboli 24, 71, Lozanovski 40

CROWD: 5,509
POY:
3 Trimboli (SM)
2 Panopoulos (SM)
1 L. Carle (SO)

NO KNIGHT OF GLORY

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS .....1 PERTH GLORY.....2

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Perth Glory won its first game in seven attempts in Victoria with a 2-1 win over Melbourne Knights on Sunday.

A strong second half performance from Perth set up the win after Ivan Kelic had given the Knights a half-time lead of 1-0.

The Knights fielded an under strength side with six players on the sidelines either injured or suspended.

Slavko Rados came in for his debut after being signed from St Albans Saints just two days before the game.

The Glory too were without key players. Vinko Buljubasic was out as was Samson Siasia (on international duty with Nigeria in Hong Kong).

Neither side looked like breaking the deadlock in early exchanges until Kelic struck first blood seven minutes before half-time.

He was on the end of an Ante Deak cross to sidefoot a shot that just squirmed under the body of Tony Franken.

Five minutes later Troy Halpin was denied his first goal for Perth by the post, when his effort from 25 metres bobbled over the hands of Joe Didulica and bounced back into play off the upright.

But there was a Halpin on the scoresheet four minutes into the second period, it was Troy's older brother Scott.

Running onto an intelligent back-heel from his brother, Scott lashed a left foot volley into the net.

Now Perth had the Knights on the back foot and Bobby Despotovski missed a chance after a terrific through pass from Scott Halpin sliced the Knights defence open, but Despotovski's toe poke ballooned over the bar.

The winner Glory had been chasing came in the 68th minute, and it was not a goal Knights keeper Joe Didulica is likely to forget in a hurry.

The young keeper came out of his area to head the ball clear after Perth had got around the back of the Knights defence.

His header bounced straight to Ernie Tapai who calmly controlled the ball and lobbed it into the empty net from thirty metres out.

Glory coach Gary Marocchi was pleased with the victory, their first in Victoria.

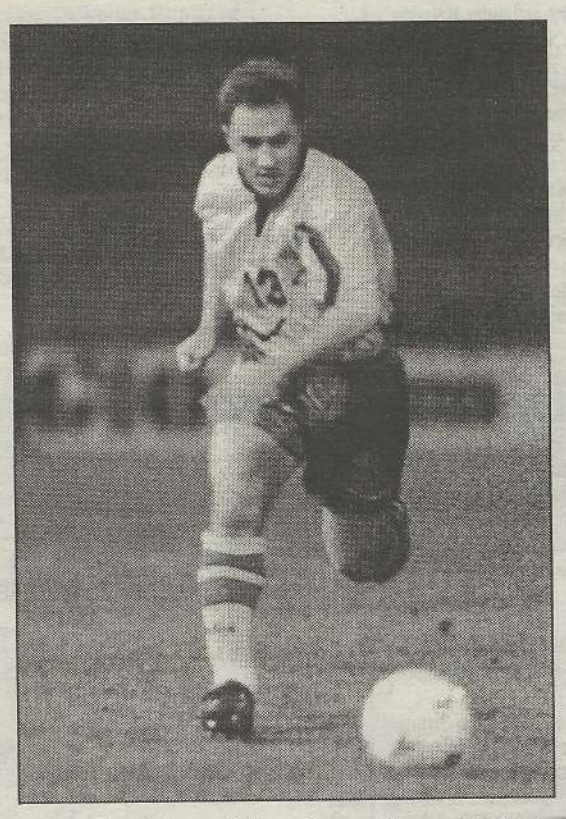
"We played reasonably well in the first half but it didn't go our way but in the second half we showed that we are a good away team," he said.

"We played better than them and won the game."

Ken Worden said that his side didn't show the same commitment in the second half as they did in the first half and that having players out hurt them.

"We were thin on the ground today and the replacements tried hard."

In the end a sweet victory for the Glory boys, gaining revenge for last year's loss which dumped the Perth side out of the Top Six.



Ernie Tapai: Scored Glory winner with an audacious 30m chip.

KNIGHTS: Joe Didulica, Kovacevic, Marth, Rados, Pondeljak (Kutlesovski 69), Kelic, Nastevski, John Didulica, Deak, Cerro, Rajher.

GLORY: Franken, Wilkinson (Vukmirovic 51), Naven, Miller, Despotovski, Tapai (Strudwick 88), Afkos (McVittie 88), S.Halpin, Hay, Carbone, T.Halpin.

SCORERS
Knights: Kelic 38
Glory: S.Halpin 49, Tapai 68

CROWD: 4,500

POY
3 S.Halpin (PG)
2 J. Didulica (MK)
1 Carbone (PG)

FANS SERVED CHAMPAGNE FARE

ADELAIDE CITY .....1 CARLTON 1

By Val Migliaccio

Adelaide City and Carlton played out an exciting end-to-end 1-1 draw at Hindmarsh Stadium on Sunday night.

The Blues and the Zebras at times played champagne soccer with the game the winner in front of an adoring Adelaide gallery of 4,605.

Carlton made their first A-League appearance in Adelaide one to remember and no doubt they go back to Melbourne with a few more interstate fans.

Refreshing, entertaining and exhilarating as the Blues showed that they are a force to be reckoned with in their debut season.

Fans could be forgiven for thinking they were witnessing a classical European football match as both teams strived to outwit each other and create openings on the counter attack.

The match-ups on the park were great to see with Zebra captain Alex Tobin having the job on John Markovski and Blues captain Sean Douglas on Zebra, Damian Mori. At the end of the night not one player could claim that they totally won their position on the park, such was the evenness of the game.

Carlton opened the scoring in the third minute of play when skilful Lubo Lapsansky won a free-kick on a tight angle 30 metres away from goal. With the resultant free-kick Lapsansky bent the ball towards the near post at pace which was deflected past Zebra keeper Jason Petkovic for the Blues to lead the game 1-0.

City midfielders Kris Trajanovski and Man-of-the-Match John Gibson combined in the sixth minute to present Scott Thomas with a header chance which lacked pace and accuracy to trouble the Blues.

Young Carlton dynamo Marco Bresciano was damaging early, forcing Petkovic into a brilliant save from point blank range after some solid Carlton pressure.

Markovski came into action in the 15th minute with a jinking run inside the box which brough the best out of Petkovic.

After the initial setback of the goal, the Zebras were back on track and Blues keeper Dean Anastasiadis kept them in the game denying first Michael Brooks who was supplied by Mori, then a one-on-one with Mori himself.

The Zebras almost equalised in the 38th minute when a quick free-kick by Mori released Brooks who watched in agony as his bending shot cannoned off the crossbar.

Adelaide opened the second half with a goal barrage and in the 46th minute a great 50 metre through ball by Milan Ivanovic spotted Mori and once again Anastasiadis was there for the Blues with great keeping.

A minute later there was a great triangle of passes involving a back-heel by Mori to Brad Armour who sent in a cross to Brooks, but he was frustrated by Anastasiadis.

Black and Whites coach John Nyskohus brought on substitutes Brad Hassell and Dino Mennillo for Mark Yates and Thomas in the 65th minute to try and salvage the match.

The move paid off in the 73rd minute when Mennillo whipped in a corner to Hassell who was unmarked in the six yard box and he made no mistake with a powerful header.

The match seemed destined for a draw when, in the 82nd minute, the two Carlton substitutes, Marcus Stergiopoulos and Daniel Allsopp combined with the latter presented an opportunity to score Carlton's second from four metres only to see his unchallenged effort sail high and wide.

ZEBRAS: Petkovic, Armour, Yates, Ivanovic, Tobin, Castanzo, Mori, Gibson, Trajanovski, Brooks, Thomas.

BLUES: Anastasiadis, Trajkovski, Anthopoulos, Colosimo, Douglas, Atkinson, Lapsansky, Bresciano, Grella, Vlahos.

SCORERS
Zebras: Hassell 73
Blues: Lapsansky 3

CROWD: 4,605

POY
3 Gibson (AC)
2 Lapsansky (CSC)
1 Tobin (AC)

ERICSSON CUP

Results Round Eighteen

Newcastle Breakers	1	Wollongong City	2	Brisbane Strikers	0	Sydney Utd	3
Marconi Fairfield	3	Gippsland Falcons	0	Canberra Cosmos	1	Adel Sharks	0
Melbourne Knights	1	Perth Glory	2	Adelaide City	1	Carlton SC	1
UTS Olympic	1	South Melbourne	3				

Pablo Cardozo: Leader of the pack.

ERICSSON CUP LEADING SCORERS

13 Pablo Cardozo	Adelaide Sharks
12 Damian Mori	Adelaide City
10 Scott Chipperfield	Wollongong
10 Paul Trimboli	Sth Melbourne
9 Norman Tome	UTS Olympic
8 Abbas Saad	Sydney United
7 Peter Buljan	Canberra Cosmos
7 Tom Pondeljak	Melbourne Knights
7 Brad Maloney	Marconi
7 Claytone Zane	Newcastle Breakers
7 Anthony Surjan	Wollongong City
6 Clayton Zane	Newcastle Breakers
6 John Anastasiadis	South Melbourne
5 David Mitchell	Sydney United

Premier League Fixtures

Odds courtesy of SportOdds

Wednesday 4th February				
2.50	Barnsley	3.25	Tottenham	2.55
1.10	Newcastle	6.00	Stevenage	15.00
Saturday 7th February				
2.00	Arsenal	3.25	Chelsea	3.25
2.75	Barnsley	3.25	Everton	2.25
1.45	Blackburn	3.75	Tottenham	6.00
2.00	Coventry	3.40	Sheffield Wed	3.00
2.25	Crystal Palace	3.25	Wimbledon	2.75
1.80	Derby	3.30	Aston Villa	3.50
2.00	Leicester City	3.25	Leeds United	3.25
1.70	Liverpool	3.50	Southampton	4.50
1.15	Manchester United	5.50	Bolton	11.00
1.75	Newcastle United	3.50	West Ham	4.00

1998 WORLD CUP

Brazil	4.00
France	7.00
England	8.00
Germany	8.00
Holland	9.00
Italy	9.00
Argentina	13.00
Spain	16.00
Yugoslavia	23.00
Croatia	26.00
Nigeria	29.00
Romania	29.00
Denmark	34.00
Colombia	41.00
Norway	41.00
Bulgaria	51.00
Paraguay	51.00
Belgium	61.00
Austria	91.00
Cameroon	101.00
Chile	126.00
Mexico	126.00
Scotland	141.00
Morocco	151.00
Sth Africa	201.00
Sth Korea	201.00
USA	201.00
Jamaica	251.00
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Japan	401.00
Tunisia	401.00
Iran	501.00

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1st Grade players interested Contact Andrew **91812856** for information

ERICSSON CUP TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Melbourne	18	10	6	2	43	25	36
Sydney United	18	10	6	2	29	13	36
Adelaide City	16	9	2	5	29	17	29
Carlton	18	7	8	3	22	16	29
Wollongong City	17	9	1	7	36	18	28
Marconi Fairfield	18	8	4	6	22	21	28
Perth Glory	18	8	4	6	23	25	28
Melbourne Knights	17	6	5	6	22	21	23
Gippsland Falcons	18	6	5	7	18	23	23
Adelaide Sharks	18	6	3	9	23	29	21
UTS Olympic	18	6	3	9	22	33	21
Brisbane Strikers	18	6	0	12	16	27	18
Canberra Cosmos	18	3	6	9	20	36	15
Newcastle Breakers	18	1	5	12	18	39	8

ERICSSON CUP TOP SIX

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ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

AWARITEFE STARS FOR MARCONI

MARCONI FAIRFIELD .....3 GIPPSLAND FALCONS 0

By John Economos

Marconi's gangling striker Francis Awaritefe greatly inspired his team to a solid 3-0 win over visiting Gippsland Falcons last Saturday night at the Marconi Stadium.

Awaritefe, with a high-level workrate constantly pierced the Falcons defence on both flanks with his long galloping raids to repeatedly rifle crosses into the visitors' box.

All Marconi's goals were scored in the second half with left midfielder Vlado Zoric nailing a double while half-time sub, striker Sean Babic, scored the third to celebrate his departure last Sunday night for trials with Serie A's Empoli.

Early on and Awaritefe shaved the base of the left post after good lead up work from Brendan Renaud and Luke Casserly.

However Falcons' industrious midfielder Mark Foy, just before the break, crossed from the left after beating no less than three defenders, but Manny Gotis went wide with his shot.

Seconds after half-time Marconi opened the scoring when Awaritefe's low cross fired from the left was steered into the far corner by Zoric for the first of his double.

On the hour mark, Babic doubled the scoreline when he guided a Casserly cross deep into the net.

Zoric completed his double in the 68th minute when he raced in unguardedly to head just inside the right post a Renaud cross from the left.

Falcons' disappointed coach Frank Arok lamented after the game that "the problem was not with our commitment or effort, it was the fact that we failed with our concentration to focus on the job. I beleive the second goal was in fact scored from an offside position.

"It was a simple equation, we squandered possession and we badly missed front runners Joe Tricarico and Nick Tsaltas. In the end they penalised us heavily for every single mistake we committed."

Meanwhile Marconi's master Zoran Matic was reluctant to make any lengthy comments other than saying that "we created chances which always pleases me and I am just glad to take maximum points."

Francis Awaritefe: Let his feet do the talking.

STALLIONS:
Covic, Casserly (Gibson 74), M.Babic, Iongo, Renaud, Care (Tomich 81), McDonald, Zoric, Mendez (S.Babic 46), Awaritefe.

FALCONS:
Kourtis, Gotis, Sekulic, Canosa, Bell (Mitroulas 63), Marcina, Hastie, Osman (MacNicol 61), Foy, Mihajlovic (Thompson 61), Palamaras.

SCORERS
Marconi: Zoric 46,68, S.Babic 60

CROWD: 3,924

POY
3 Awaritefe (MF)
2 Zoric (MF)
1 Sekulic (GF)

UNITED'S GRAND FINAL REVENGE

BRISBANE STRIKERS .....0 SYDNEY UNITED 3

By Glenn Davis

Sydney United drove another nail deep into the coffin of Brisbane Strikers' Final Six hopes with a comprehensive 3-0 victory at Suncorp Stadium last Saturday night.

Player/coach Frank Farina is refusing to surrender — and so he should — citing a mathematical chance of securing a late charge to defend the club's Grand Final victory, which they did in emphatic style, with a 2-0 win against the Pumas before a crowd of 40,000 plus last season.

In stark contrast to that match only 4,000 fans braved the miserable and wet conditions to watch their heroes slip further into trouble.

The opening 20 minutes was a dour affair with both sides bogged down in a midfield battle.

Farina had warned his players in the pre-match talk that whoever won 'the battle' would eventually emerge victors and his advice proved spot on as Sydney United routed Brisbane in every department.

The rot started for the reigning champions in the 34th minute after an uncharacteristic mistake from Strikers midfielder Kasey Wehrman who gave away possession.

The mistake eventually led to United pouncing on the break with Marcus Phillips rounding sweeper Craig Williams before neatly chipping over keeper Clint Bolton's head into the top right corner of the net.

The setback took the steam out of the home side, who looked to be gaining the upper hand after missing several earlier opportunities.

Instead of being on the backfoot following Phillips' goal, the Strikers should have been leading had midfielder Chay Hews finished off a clever back-heal from Troy Cranney from the edge of the box.

Hews' attempt was a meek side-footer which sailed straight into the arms of giant United keeper Zeljko Kalac. The Strikers, who were missing their defensive backbone in Glen Gywnne and Chris Zoricich through suspensions, lost their night's best player, Nick Meredith, with a corked leg three minutes after half time.

Meredith had only just left the park when the visitors stunned the champions with their second goal following a clever switch of play from the left to David Barrett on the right.

Barrett, who roamed towards the edge of the box, couldn't believe his eyes when he spotted Bolton well off his line and he had no problem chipping the keeper into the net for his tenth career goal.

Striker Nick Bosevski rubbed salt into the Strikers' wounds ten minutes from time with his second career goal after Phillips released a perfect pass for him to score from the edge of the box.

Clint Bolton: Chipped by Phillips for the first goal.

STRIKERS:
Bolton, Bell, Williams, Laybutt, Blackford, T Cranney, Hews (S Cranney 57), Wehrman (Knipe 72), Harper, Farina, Meredith (Harris 48).

PUMAS:
Kalac, Barrett, Kupresak, Plesa, Vrkic, Hooker, Bennett, Phillips, Bilokapic, Saad (Culina 88), Bosevski.

SCORERS
United: Phillips 34, Barrett 49, Bosevski 60.

CROWD: 4,008

POY
3 Bilokapic (SU)
2 Bosevski (SU)
1 Saad (SU)

HUNTER TAMES SHARKS

CANBERRA COSMOS.....1 ADELAIDE SHARKS 0

By Nick Guoth

A dour match in muddy conditions resulted in a close victory to Canberra Cosmos over the Adelaide Sharks on Saturday.

And to further compound Adelaide's misery Jim Tsekinis was sent-off for appearing to elbow Toplica Popovich in the face.

Canberra's Scottish import Gordon Hunter was on hand to put away his first goal for the club and that was enough to give Cosmos their third victory of the season, edging them further away from the bottom of the league.

To the surprise of many the Cosmos came out with three attackers, a plan that confounded the visitors.

After only 10 minutes Olyroo Peter Buljan looked like he was taken down in the penalty are, but referee Eddie Lennie was right on the spot to wave play on.

During a lacklustre first half there were few chances, the best fell to Andy Ravanello and Michael Musitano who had shots tipped over the Sharks bar while Jim Tsekinis, who tried his heart out prior to his expulsion, should have done better with a free header early in the game.

Adelaide came out in the second half, having beefed up their defence, looked more the equal of their opponents. Like the first half there were few shots on goal, and those that were on target were handled well by Tony Giannasca and his counterpart Nathan Wildy (returning from suspension).

A string of substitutes seemed to bring a little more life into the game. A half hour into the second period and an error by Wildy, after Harry James headed the ball back, and the ball fell to Hunter to score the decisive goal.

Not long later Jim Tsekinis let fly with an elbow to the face after some close defending by Popovich. Although down to ten men the Sharks fought on and in the last few minutes a Borghetto header was met by Adrian Iandiorio whose shot was just tipped over the bar.

Canberra coach Branko Culina was both relieved and pleased with the win after three losses in a row. "Yes difficult conditions, but we created more chances and were always in control. The team showed character and they all handled themselves well."

A rather unhappy Adrian Santrac reflected: "We played a very poor first half. The game was not of high quality and for us the breaks are just not coming. I was very disappointed tonight."

Adrian Santrac: Disappointed with his team's performance.

COSMOS:
Giannasca, Dee, Ravanello (James 69), Moric (Brown 71), Hunter, Kelly, Musitano, Buljan, Wilson (Prenzoski 61), Popovich, Haythornthwaite.

SHARKS:
Wildy, Castro, Tibaldi (Oliveira 68), Kuzmanovic, Milosevic (Iandiorio 81), Kokkinoplitis, Pezos, Tsekinis, Misailidis, Iriarte (Borghetto 68), Hristodoulou.

SCORER
Canberra: Hunter 75

CROWD: 2,472

POY
3 Haythornthwaite (CC)
2 Ravanello (CC)
1 Milosevic (AS)

ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

PERINICH STARS AGAIN

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS .....1 WOLLONGONG CITY 2

By Dane Skafte

The Breakers slumped to their 17th straight game without a win in Friday night's clash against arch-rivals Wollongong City, going down 1-2 at Topper Stadium. .

After Tony Perinich missed an early chance at the near post from a cross, the Wolves opened the scoring in the 12th minute when Perinich jinked around two defenders before easily scoring with his left peg past Brad Swancott.

And things got worse seven minutes later when Wollongong's midfield maestro Anthony Surjan's free-kick curled past the wall and just out of reach of Swancott.

It looked like the Wolves renowned scoring prowess would overwhelm the home side, yet instead Newcastle kept their chances alive after veteran Robbie Ironside, following a tussle in the box, chipped a ball into the net in the 35th minute.

And just on half-time Newcastle had the opportunity to level the scores after a powerful shot by Doug West from 20 metres out had Wolves keeper Adam Brodbeck fully stretched to save a certain goal.

So all was not lost for the locals, and in the remaining 45 minutes the Breakers created the majority of the chances but the lack of finishing ability (the bane of the side this year) prevented any more goals being scored.

And just to add their woes, after the game it was announced that gun striker Clayton Zane will leave the Breakers to join potential NSL powerhouse Northern Spirit.

The young striker stated that the departure of Troy Halpin hastened his decision to move, as well as the impressive offer made to him by the new Ericsson Cup club based on Sydney's north shore.

Zane also felt that the move to Sydney would be helpful in regard to his international aspirations.

Coming on top of the resignation of Pat Clarke as GM of the club, these are dark days for this proud club.

As for the Wolves, they are right on track for the Finals.

Clayton Zane: Announced after the game he will be joining new club, Northern Spirit, next season.

BREAKERS: Swancott, Austin, Pryce, McManus, Ironside, Ritchie, Wilson (Lane 76), Zane, Tollenaere, West, Edwards (Bennett 56).

WOLVES: Brodbeck, Ceccoli (Spencer 72), Stanton, Connolly, Horsley, Sevin (Dimoski 55), Surjan, Chipperfield, Souris, Perinich (Masi 78), Huxley.

SCORERS
Newcastle: Ironside 3
Wollongong: Perinich 12, Surjan 19.

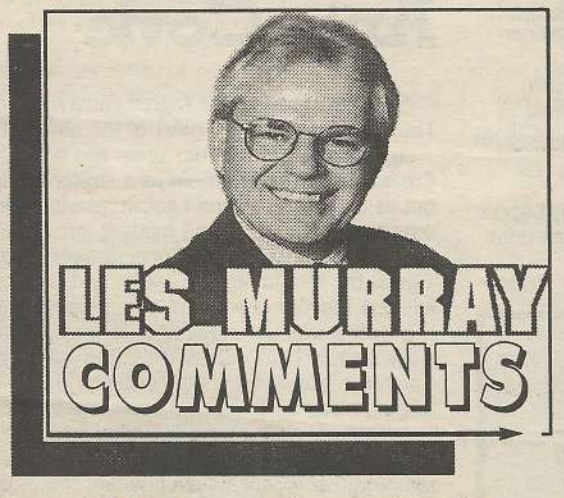
CROWD: 2,389

POY
3 Perinich (WC)
2 Brodbeck (WC)
1 West (NB)

Mystery Players

Vaughan Coveny

'Och aye' Aussie?



CLUB OWNERSHIP A POSITIVE?

The battle at the weekend over the future of Sydney Olympic may have seemed to some as some bizarre and unwanted new development in the running of sports clubs.

Entrepreneurs, who are experts at buying and selling all things from stocks and shares to used cars, suddenly develop an interest in running football clubs which, after all, have always been the property of the people.

Well, actually no. Club ownership has been around for decades although, admittedly, it's fairly recently that speculation has entered the arena of club football. Since the advent of pay TV and the knock-on effects of the Bosman ruling, football the world over has become absolutely flush with money and clubs' potential to earn revenue has risen sharply.

Consequently, the world of business has taken notice and clubs are increasingly being floated on stock exchanges while other clubs are being bought by private concerns intent on making profits.

For example, a British company called ENIC, run by a golf-playing billionaire called Joe Lewis (who has no record of ever having had any interest in Soccer) has bought controlling interests in four European clubs: Glasgow Rangers, AEK Athens, Slavia Prague and Vicenza of the Serie A. And they are now looking to add Bordeaux of France to their growing portfolio. ENIC are in there for one reason only, to ensure and see the value of the clubs rise with a view to re-selling them.

It's a worrying trend for UEFA who are particularly concerned at the prospect that clubs owned by the same owner might end up in the same European tournament and may do each other favours when playing against third parties.

But for the moment here in Australia it should be a welcome trend. Rene Rivkin for instance may have mounted his now failed bid for Olympic purely as a speculator, for that is what he is. But he would not have mounted it if he didn't believe that he could build the club to such a level of stability and prosperity that it may then be worth selling at a handsome profit.

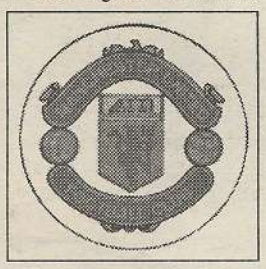
And stability and prosperity means consistently good results, trophies in the cabinet, a healthy bank balance and a good marketable image. Aren't they precisely the things Olympic has never had?

Rene Rivkin: Battled for control at Olympic.

UNITED CHAMPS OFF-FIELD TOO

Speaking of money, which is the richest club in the world today? Well, it's official. It's Manchester United. Not Milan, Juventus, Barcelona or Real Madrid. In the financial year ending June 1996, United's turnover was $107 million compared to Milan's $90 million. And while Milan actually made an operating loss of $35 million, Man United made a whopping profit of $33 million.

The image that Milan is a



bigger club than United might be hidden in the massive difference between the wage bills at the two clubs. United's wage bill was just $27 million compared to Milan's massive $62 million.

With that kind of wage bill of course you can attract the world's best players and convey the image that you are the biggest club.

All this will of course soon change when Milan is floated on the stock exchange and it will have to be run like a business, not an expensive plaything.

IT'S JUST NOT KOREAN

There is much to admire about the Korean sense of fair play. In a recent match in the K-league one of the teams took a one-goal lead through an own goal and were heading for victory. In Korean culture, it appears, winning through an own goal is not considered particularly honourable and means a loss of face for the winning team.

So the team leading decided to 'loosen its defence', shall we say, hoping that the opposition would score.

There was only one problem. The goalkeeper, a Russian, knew not what was going on and knew even less about the Korean sense of fair play and honour. So every shot that came his way was met with goalkeeping heroics that Yev Yashin or Gordon Banks would have been proud of. Much to the dismay of the crowd, who knew what was going on, they showed no great appreciation for his inhuman efforts between the posts. And the keeper's colleagues of course turned on him in amazement at how he was letting the team down.

Thanks to the keeper his team won but there was only doom, gloom and dropped heads in the dressing room. The keeper was last seen sitting alone on the team bus, scratching his head.

See? And you thought honour and decency had gone out of football!...

Luke Tomich

St Marys soccer club was where Luke Tomich first played soccer. He spent most of his younger days there and picked up a couple of titles with the team.

In Year six he also played in the Metropolitan West representative side alongside current team-mate Mauro Van Cuylenberg. Luke also played for the state rep. sides and the Nepean rep. teams in the U/11s and U/12s. He then played for Blacktown City in the youth structure there. "In fact, in the U/14s we made it all the way to the Grand Final. We were up against Parramatta Melita, who played all their big guns, and we had not beaten them while I had been at City. It was extra good to take them out in the Grand Final!," he happily recalls.

Through most of this time he had played as a striker although, occasionally, he played as a wide man on the left. Then the trials at Marconi were coming up, but one lad who would not be involved was Luke Tomich: "I had just had a major knee operation, the cartilage had been damaged. Fortunately Eddie McPherson (now youth team coach at Marconi) had seen me play and invited me to join Marconi anyway," stated Tomich.

The youngster worked his way through the U/16s, Colts and Youth team before moving off to the AIS.

"I had a great time at the AIS. Our first month was with Ron Smith, (who then moved to Malaysia and was replaced by his assistant Steve O'Connor). Soccer-wise, the place was brilliant and I played up front with Mile Sterjovski and, hopefully, one day we will play for Australia together.

"There were plenty of other class acts in our year and we enjoyed ourselves. They also gave us opportunities to go out and forget soccer for a while," he notes.

Tomich went straight into first grade training at Marconi, although he has not yet had the opportunities he yearns for in that first side: "I will get my chance but it is up to the coach. Sometimes, once you have been around the first team, it is hard to motivate yourself to play in the youth side, you see yourself dropping back to that level rather than proving you have the goods to be in the first side. To make it you have to overcome this though."

This does not mean he is going to give up though. On the contrary, Tomich is hoping to make it into the squad going to Italy at season's end and to make a bit of a name for himself over there: "I aim to make it into the starting eleven before season's end. I can learn from people at Marconi, Lee Sterrey is always there to lend me a hand, and I can learn off people like Francis Awaritefe at the club. Francis may be a different player to me but he does things, like holding the ball up well, which I can learn from."

In fact, holding up the ball is one of the skills Luke is blessed with, along with his left foot strikes and close control skills. You do not have to be a really fast striker to be a great one.

He may want to be involved in the senior side but there is one place he ended up this season for the first team he hopes not to frequent any more; that is in goal: "With Ante injured the coach asked if I had ever played in goals. I said no but I would give anything a go and all of a sudden I was out there. It was extremely nerve racking knowing one mistake could cost us big."

Paradoxically Marconi had a striker in goals and a keeper who likes being a striker (see Ante Covic story)!

Outside of soccer Tomich enjoys playing golf and tennis. Like so many other soccer players he would rather play than watch yet enjoys a range of challenges.

His ambitions in soccer are to stay at Marconi as long as he can and then play in Europe. As for national team honours, "I was a bit to young for the Youth Camp just announced so I am looking forward to the trials for the 1999 World Youth Cup, that is my main aim at present."

Once he has retired?

"I would like to have people identify who I am in the street. I would like to say soccer was not a waste of time, that I was vindicated in the choice I made, and that I had done everything I could in the game."

Ante Covic

Ante Covic played for Zagreb Hurstville from the U/6s until he was around 19-years of age. The only thing was, for most of the time, he played as a striker!

"It was only around four years ago that I switched to being in goals. I trialled for Sydney Croatia (as they were then) as a striker but it did not look like I would make it. Dad said to try out as a goalkeeper and I got in, playing one-and-a-half seasons there in the U/14s and U/15s. I returned to Hurstville and made it into the Premier League side. It was in this team that I was spotted by the Leichardt Tigers' assistant coach of the U/21s. I had two full seasons at the Tigers, the first in reserve grade, and the second in the first team. Tony Pezzano (former keeper) was our coach and of course he was a great help to me."

In fact it was the Pezzano that helped him move to Marconi. "I was playing well and Tony let a few people know about me in the game. In the end there were a few NSL coaches coming to watch me play and I could choose a club. I chose Marconi. I felt it was time to join the big league, I was 22 and it was a bit of a case of now or never."

At Marconi things were looking up as he was first choice keeper and destined for a long spell between the sticks as they did not have too much choice in the cupboard. Then came a moment that would sicken any fan. "I had played well in the first two games, including a 'Man of the Match' in the first.

"I was then injured going for the ball in my third match. At first I thought I was just winded, but it ended up being much worse than that. Things could have been a lot worse, but to be told I would be out for six weeks was a huge blow for me. I would rather be on the field than watching any day. I came back earlier than the doctor advised and the injury remained in the back of my mind although you do try to shut it out."

While many would see the purchase of Michael Gibson as a threat to Covic's position, it has turned out to be a blessing. "Gibbo helps me enormously and it is good to have his experience as he lets me know where I am going wrong and how to help improve aspects of my game where he sees errors."

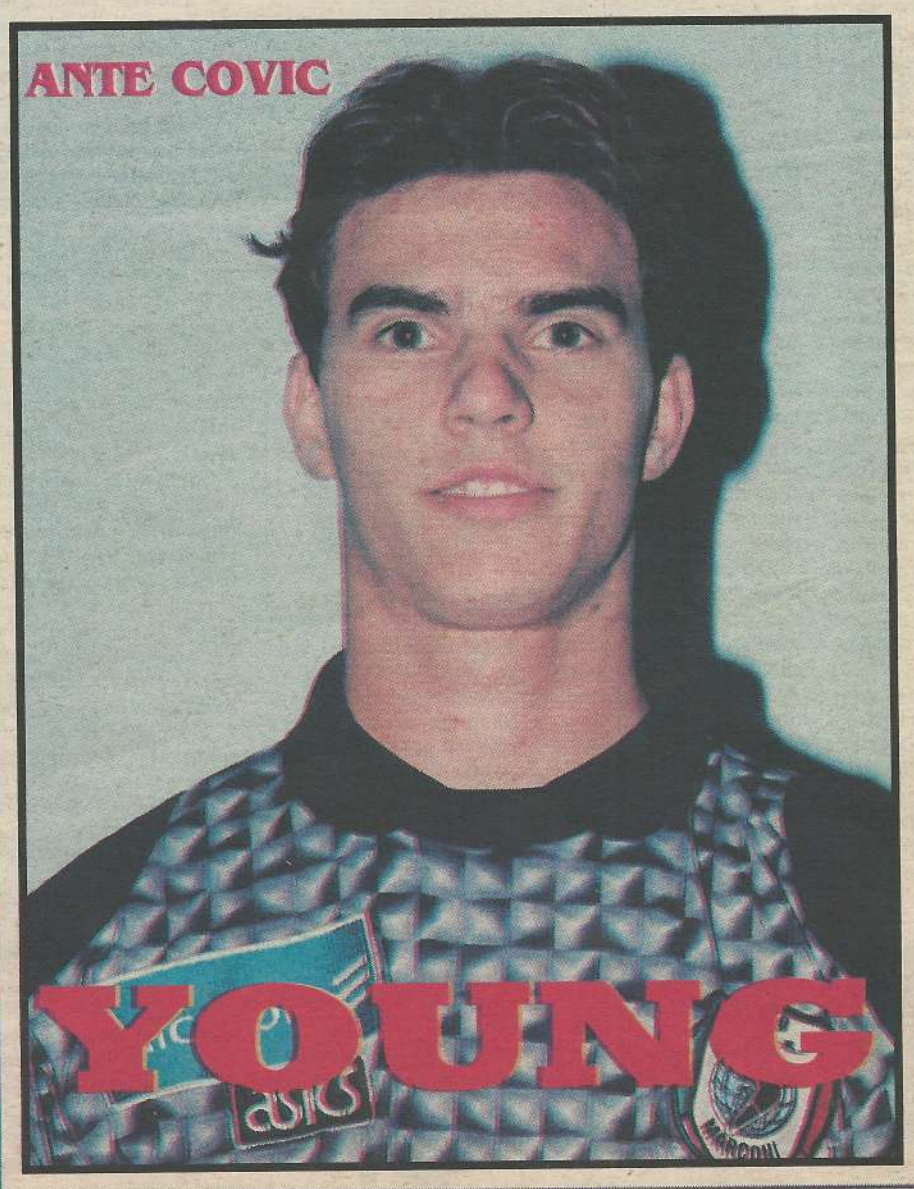
The coaching staff at Marconi help out too, as he explains: "Recently I have dropped off a bit from where my game was at the beginning of the season, but the coaching staff have been great in helping me through. Zoran (Matic) wants to get me back to where I was, he wants to get the best out of all of us. Lee Sterrey trains me when he gets a chance and they are both great. In fact, I get along well with everyone in the club."

The coaching staff may want to make sure there is a chain keeping Ante near the posts, just in case he gets flashbacks of his days as a striker. "I always enjoyed it on the field, and had good success out there. I made a decision to be a keeper and have to stick with it, but my idols as kid were Suker (he supports Real Madrid), Gullit and Van Basten."

Outside of football Covic enjoys motor sports of all kind.

As for his future, his aims are fairly similar to many youngsters around the league. "I would like to have a couple of seasons in the NSL, consolidating my game, and then go and play overseas, perhaps with a team in Germany or Spain.

"I share my dream of playing for the national side with a lot of people around the NSL. I would love to play for Australia. When I look back on my career I want to be able to say I enjoyed the game and was successful at it."



YOUNG GUNS

Mauro Van Cuylenberg

Born in Naples, of Sri Lankan and Italian parentage, the cosmopolitan Van Cuylenberg first came to Australia in 1986 and played for a team just around the corner from the Marconi Stadium.

Parramatta Melita then took him on and he played in the U/14s before a move to Sydney United, where he played for the U/15s and the Colts side before moving once more, this time to Marconi.

He started in their U/16 team and represented NSW at this level before Marconi signed him to a three-year youth contract, which expires at the end of this season.

After half a season of reserve football, under current first-team assistant coach Lee Sterrey, Mauro went to the Australian Institute of Sport. He was at the AIS for two seasons and played alongside the likes of Brett Emerton and Tynan Scope, and then returned to the Stallions team at the beginning of this season and immediately trained with the senior side.

He came off the bench for the first five games before making the starting line-up for the first time in the ill-fated (for Marconi) game away at Wollongong (a 5-1 loss). Van Cuylenberg returned to the bench only to be struck done by bronchitis a few weeks later but is only now back on the verge of first-team selection.

It is always tough to inspire yourself when in the youth team and it is the same for this young lad. "Sometimes it is hard to motivate yourself when back in the youth league once you have had a taste of the first-team, but the coaches are looking at how you respond so you have to play well anyway. We have a big squad and had a few more players come on board through the season so it will be tough. Zoran Matic is a great coach though and I think he has done a great job in giving everyone a fair go."

Van Cuylenberg has always played up front, which may surprise people who have only seen him this season: "I have always been a striker. I used to play in midfield on the odd occasion if we were desperate, however, now I seem to be spending more and more time in the midfield at Marconi. In the end it does not matter, I enjoy being involved and if I am in the middle of the park I get more of the ball. I also love being on the flanks as it gives me the opportunity to go on runs and beat defenders. I am the sort of player who prefers to get the ball."

At present he is still on a youth contract and would like to sort out his future in the NSL before thinking about going overseas. "I would rather gain a couple of years experience in the NSL before thinking about overseas. If I cannot make it here then I would find it very difficult to make it overseas. I want to make my name here rather than have to go trialling all over Europe."

In contrast, his fellow AIS graduate Tynan Scope went straight to Coventry City where he is their third choice goalkeeper.

Mauro's favourite overseas teams include Barcelona and Liverpool and he looks up to Ronaldo, as well as Vialli and Baggio. If he enjoys one tenth the success of these three he will make a very good living out of soccer.

Outside the game Mauro is working as a labourer and enjoys music and dancing (he is still single!!).

As for Australian representation, his main plan is to make the U/20 team for 1999 and go on from there. With that in mind he will be searching for a big year in the youth league and more appearances for the Stallions' senior side. This young man has aims set that are achievable and it is good to know that we will see him in the NSL for a few years yet. He is certainly a young player that Marconi supporters can be proud of.

Mauro hopes to look back on his days in soccer and be able to say "I had a happy time, I was a good, hard working player who contributed and changed the outcome of games."

For now, that future is in front of him. Go for it Mauro.

Christian Care

Christian Care started playing his football in Liverpool for, surprisingly enough, Liverpool City, then followed by Rangers and playing youth football for Parramatta Melita U/13s, Sydney United U/14s and U/15s. He got the opportunity to play reserve grade football as well, before finally moving on to Marconi Fairfield U/16s.

His high school days were spent at Patrician Brothers Liverpool up until Year 10. Year 11 was spent at Westfields High with the AIS having the pleasure of his company for his final year.

Care is another graduate of the AIS class that saw Tynan Scope, now with Coventry City, Tomich and Sterjovski come through. "The AIS was a big change and by the end I was a bit bored and was getting homesick living down in Canberra. The soccer was good though."

He returned to Marconi and this season has been his first in the top flight. Care's debut came in the opening round of the campaign, against Sydney Olympic at the SFS, where yet another debutant, Nick Carle of Olympic, made his name by netting the winner in the final minute of the match.

"I was really nervous before that game," said Care, "And in the end it was very disappointing to lose in the last minute like that. These days I am getting time on the ball and am feeling more comfortable about this level of the game, but I still have a lot to learn.

"The NSL is a big step-up, there is much more responsibility and pressure on the players and you certainly do feel it.

"My dad has always been a great help and he coaches me even today. He is a great motivator and I appreciate that. Lee Sterrey has taught me a lot inside Marconi, he has always given me advice, that I have utilised, and helped to keep my career on the right track."

Christian has played all his soccer in midfield, on the right hand side, and he sees his main assets as being his fitness and his passing: "I am also not averse to coming forward, in fact, I really enjoy that part of the game. If I am told to play up front I would take the opportunity with both hands. I love to be involved in attacks but I also love the midfield as well. I've spent so much of my career there so far."

Many see the life of a professional footballer as glamorous, however, what they tend to forget is the sacrifices that have to be made if you are to become a great player. "It is very difficult and getting even harder, you really need to dedicate your life to football. There is no partying hard or drinking alcohol and going out with your friends over the weekend etc. It is tough but, fortunately, my friends have ben really supportive of my career. In the end, the rewards outweigh the sacrifices though."

Instead, he has become a soccer fanatic: "I have a heap of jerseys, videos and other soccer related memorabilia. I am a big supporter of AC Milan and Italy and, one day, I would love to play over there. I have played there twice already with Marconi, and hope to make the team again at the end of the season."

For now Christian's aims are more domestically based: "I want to consolidate my position in the Marconi starting line-up. I don't want to go back into the reserve team as that would be a backward step. I want to make a name for myself in Australian soccer before going overseas, but once I am there, I would love to play in Italy.

"As for the national side, my first aim is the World Youth Cup in 1999, and then the 2000 Olympic Games team.

"I would like people to look back on my career and say that I was hard working, and a player committed to soccer.

"I want all my hard work and sacrifices to pay off."

SPECIAL 4

By Stuart Jones

Victorian Soccer Federation

FAWKNER 3 HEIDELBERG 1

By John De Felice

An action packed game at Jukes Road saw Fawkner Blues riding high after an emphatic 3-1 victory over Heidelberg United.

The game saw its first goal after 20 minutes when Jeff Stefanidis fouled Eric Vassiliadis in the penalty box. Vassiliadis himself coolly took the penalty to put the Blues ahead 1-0.

Heidelberg soaked up a lot of pressure as the Blues frantically searched for a second goal.

In the 27th minute Tony Sterjovski dribbled past his marker to shoot but his effort was well saved by Heidelberg keeper Nick Koletsas.

The second goal that Fawkner deserved finally arrived in the 33rd minute when Vassiliadis sent a through ball to Santo Emmanuele, who eluded the United offside trap, and with only Koletsas to beat calmly slotted in Fawkner's second goal of the match.

In the 44th minute Heidelberg nearly snatched a goal after a corner was met with a thunderous header by Gary Hasler, but veteran Joe Biskic was able to deflect the ball off the goal-line.

A minute later Ivan Duzel's cheeky back-heel found Emmanuele in the Heidelberg penalty area, and he scored Fawkner's third goal.

The second half was mainly dominated by the Blues but in the 71st minute Biskic's clumsy foul on Stefanidis in the area resulted in a penalty to United.

Juan Nilo stepped up and scored a consolation goal for United.

Fawkner deserved to win the game and should won by a greater margin and now they go to Green Gully next week with two wins under their belt.

Blues: Gonzales, Tramontana, Grimaud, P.Ferrante, Schipano, V.Ferrante, Vassiliadis (De Santis), Biskic, Emmanuele (T.Simsek), Duzel, T.Sterjovski (Di Sauro).

United: Koletsas, Karapatsos, Liapis, Hasler, G.Georgiadis, Lenetis (Vouloumanos), Tsoumerkas, Stefanidis, Nilo, Alexiou (Jugovic), Vatsakis (P.Georgiadis).

BENTLEIGH 1 GREEN GULLY 1

By Bert Van Bedaf

A controversial goal in injury-time drew Bentleigh Greens level with Green Gully at Kingston Heath last Saturday night.

Cavaliers coach Chris Taylor was critical of referee Jim Zafiriou and lineswoman Kryzstina Szokolai, who allowed the Greens equaliser in injury-time, while Gully players claimed the scorer, John Papettas, had handled the ball before slotting it past Gully keeper Chris Vella.

"This has happened to us before last season. Someone really should have a look at the standard of refereeing in the league," said Taylor.

Greens coach Harry Chalkitis said he thought it was a clear goal.

"I didn't see anything wrong with it," he noted.

Both goals were scored in the second half. Green Gully took the lead in the 51st minute, when Zlatko Donev put Nick Papadopoulos through on the right and the new recruit from Port Melbourne made no mistake.

For all their superior skills Green Gully was forced to defend for most of the match and their opening goal was against the run of play.

It looked like the Cavaliers were going to go home with another slender win until the dramatic injury-time equaliser.

Nobody quite knew why the referee played so much stoppage time — four minutes in all — but Chalkitis was grateful for it.

"I don't think we deserved to lose after doing most of the attacking and it was satisfying to score a late equaliser," concluded the thoughtful coach.

Greens: Clarke, Kotsovolos, Micheil, McDonagh, Constantinou, Drakos, Rossios, Van Egmond (Spence), Papettas, Kalimeris (Oter), Charalambous.

Cavaliers : Vella, Spiteri, Stafrace, Dimitrelos, Suric (Brown), Waddell, Stojcevski, Douglas, Papadopoulos, Babic, Donev (Genovesi).

Votes : 3- Waddell (GG), 2- Kalimeris (BG), 1- Douglas (GG).

PRESTON 0 ST ALBANS 1

By George Koukeris

In hot temperatures St Albans Saints pulled off a gallant victory over Preston Lions at Goodyear Stadium on Sunday, thus shaking off their first round loss.

It was a tense beginning as both teams desperately tried to push forward in the hope that defenders might wilt in the heat and break down.

A series of yellow cards were soon to follow as St Albans' Daniel Pete found referee Robert Caminiti had no patience and was booked in the 15th minute.

Preston later regained composure and started to work as a team. Forward Tony Ujgunovski narrowly missed from an acute angle and defender Zoran Drogriski decided he would attempt to steer the team into the lead with a superb header that flew just over the bar.

In the second half much was to be repeated. St Albans received a further two cautions to place added pressure for clean play.

In the 75th minute Preston defender Billy Stavrevski was given his marching orders for a deliberate handball in front of the goal.

St Albans substitute Hrvoje Karl seemed certain to convert the penalty but was thwarted by Lupce Acevski.

Minutes later Karl made amends when he accurately headed in Krunoslav Razov's cross.

Saints coach Vlado Vanis was pleased with the effort of his boys saying he received exactly what he asked from them.

Lions : Acevski, Drogriski, Lisolajski, Stavrevski, Ognenovski, Bizimovski (Dimovski), Ivanov (Slaveski), A.Burlak, M.Burlak, Ujgunovski (Talevski), Markovski.

Saints : Vunderl, Vukadin (Trapkovic), Magdic, Colina, Razov, Raspudic, Pete (J.Kozic), Cuze, Pelja, Sianidis, Pondeljak (Karl).

Votes : 3- Drogriski (PL), 2- Karl (StA), 1- Ujgunovski (PL).

SOUTH DANDENONG 3 PORT MELB 2

South Dandenong won their first Premier League game of the season defeating highly rated Port Melbourne Sharks 3-2 at Ross Reserve on Saturday.

South had to come from two goals down to gain the three points with all three of their goals coming in the last fourteen minutes.

Port took the lead in the 34th minute through new recruit Kosta Caimakamis.

They extended that lead on the hour mark when substitute Michael Tyrikos netted.

South then hit back in the 76th minute with a goal from Billy Wright and they pulled level two minutes later when Reshat Mezensof found the target.

Carlo Villani was the hero; scoring the winner with just four minutes to go to end a great day for the newcomers.

South: Dastey, May, Macinkovic, Basimi, Geri, Parrott (Muriqi), Memeti (Zafirovski), Mukaj, Wright, Villani, Mezensof.

Sharks: Frangos, Tsirtsakis, Sonsini (Livanopoulos), Tsiakos, Caimakamis, Vargas, Temos, Argyriou, Latinopoulos (Tyrikos), Giaccherini, Strapelias (Palatsides).

ROUND 1 DETAILS

Heidelberg United 0 - Bentleigh Greens 1 (Papettas)

United: Koletsas, Karapatsos, Makris, Liapis, Hasler, Svigos, G.Georgiadis, Lenetis, Tsoumerkas, Stefanidis, Nilo.

Greens: Clarke, Kalimeris, Micheil, McDonagh, Constantinou, Drakos (Oter), Kotsovolos, Van Egmond, Papettas, Rossios, Charalambous.

Votes: 3- Kotsovolos (BG), 2- Kalimeris (BG), 1- G.Georgiadis (HU).

St Albans Saints 1 (S.Rados) - Springvale White Eagles 2 (Retre 2)

Saints: Vunder, Vukadin (Kirishian), Magdic, I.Rados, Razov, Colina, J.Kozic, S.Rados, Sianidis (Pondeljak), Pelja (Vidakovic), Karl.

White Eagles: Brian, Kitanovski, M.Marinkovic, Calomino, R.Marinkovic, Mladenovic, Kozlica (Mihajlovic), Styczen (V.De La Plaza), Retre, Gacovski (Craciun), Cvetkovski.

Votes: 3- Retre (SWE), 2- Mladenovic (SWE), 1- S.Rados (SWE)

Green Gully Cavaliers 2 (Douglas, Papadopoulos) - Preston Lions 0

Cavaliers: Vella, Spiteri, Stafrace, Dimitrelos, Suric, Waddell, Stojcevski, Douglas, Papadopoulos, Babic, Donev (Genovesi).

Lions: Acevski, Slaveski (M.Burlak), Ognenovski, Stavrevski, Bizimovski, Ivanov, A.Burlak, Emsovski (Talevski), Dimovski, Ujgunovski, Markovski.

Votes: 3- Douglas (GG), 2- Waddell (GG), 1- Stafrace (GG)

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PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Round 2:

Bentleigh Greens 1 (Papettas) - Green Gully Cavaliers 1 (Papadopoulos)
South Dandenong 3 (Wright, Mezensof, Villani) - Port Melbourne Sharks 2 (Caimakamis, Tyrikos)
Preston Lions 0 - St Albans Saints 1 (Karl)
Fawkner Blues 3 (Vassiliadis, Emmanuele 2) - Heidelberg United 1 (Nilo)
Sunshine Georgies 0 - Thomastown Zebras 4 (Lazarevski 3, Cuculevski)
Springvale White Eagles 2 (Mladenovic, Runje (og) - Altona Magic 1 (Petrevski)

PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

Round 3:

Friday February 6

Port Melbourne Sharks v Bulleen Inter Kings - Anderson Reserve - kick off 8.30pm

Sunday February 8

Moorabbin City v Altona Magic - Kingston Heath Soccer Complex - kick off 6.00pm
Thomastown Zebras v South Dandenong - Partridge Reserve - kick off 6.00pm
Heidelberg United v Sunshine Georgies - Olympic Village - kick off 6.00pm
St Albans Saints v Bentleigh Greens - Churchill Reserve - kick off 6.00pm
Preston Lions v Springvale White Eagles - Goodyear Stadium - kick off 6.00pm

Monday February 9

Green Gully Cavaliers v Fawkner Blues - Green Gully Reserve - kick off 8.15pm

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WOMEN'S WRITES

BY JANENE MAR

ANSETT AUSTRALIA SUMMER SERIES POOL A ROUND – MELBOURNE

BRACKEN'S BRILLIANCE DENIES QLD

VIC 2 QAS 1

Victoria recorded their first win of the season with a well deserved upset 2-1 victory over reigning champions Queensland last Friday night at Melbourne's Bulleen Soccer Club.

Buoyed by their confident showing during the crossover round the week previous, and with home ground advantage, Victoria were hungry from the off and eager to push forward at every opportunity.

The visitors had another barrier to overcome in the form of Victorian goalkeeper Emma Bracken, whose performance was crucial.

Queensland on the other hand had taken the field needing to lift themselves out of a frustratingly bad patch after Canberra, where they had taken just one win from the three matches.

Overall Victoria looked the more dangerous whenever in attack, creating headaches for a sometimes disorganised QAS defence. The Queenslanders had their share of possession but, as a team, were bogged down and failed to force their way through.

QAS had created two good chances in the opening ten minutes, Lisa Dunne's thumping drive from the edge of the 18 yard stopped in its tracks by Bracker with a great diving save. And Kim Revel 's 20 metre bullet was destined to hit the arget until Bracken flew to her left to fingertip the ball around the post.

But three minutes later it was Victoria who took the lead through a penalty, Louise Bisby duly scoring.

QAS tried to lift against the determined Vics, but it was the home side who doubled their lead in the 23rd minute. Bisby this time became the provider with a beautifully floated corner kick into the near post, midfielder Leanne Hamilton amongst the crowd grabbing the vital touch off the body from two metres.

Victoria went on in search of more goals, Silvana Cosic coming closest with two good opportunities before the break.

In the second half Queensland's Kim Revell took matters into her own hands and created three good chances which were thwarted by the Vics' resolute defence.

Finally, with seven minutes remaining, a cross from the right picked out Sonia Gegenhuber who fed Revell with a glancing backheader. From 12 metres, Revell struck as the keeper came out to challenge, and the ball over the line. 2-1 to the Vics and everything to play for.

Revell weaved her way up the centre and despatched Georgette Leake on the right. A first-time snap shot from 22 metres saw Bracken pull out another flying save to tip the ball trickled over the crossbar at full stretch — a match saving effort from a brilliant custodian.

VICTORIA: Bracken, Zacharopoulos, McEvoy, Walker (Leitch 81), Digiammarco, Barbieri, Fitzgerald, Hamilton, Bisby, Terek, Cosic.

QAS: Butland, Whiddett, Gegenhuber, McShea, Leake, Garven, Revell, Mann, Bond (Short 59), Dunne, Ferguson.

KITCHING STARS BUT SASI WIN

SASI 1 QAS 0

South Australia stretched their lead at the top of Pool A with a narrow 1-0 win over Queensland last Saturday.

Early on and Queensland came close with a Lisa Dunne side volley from 10 metres, but the attempt was well blocked.

Two minutes later, SASI took the lead when a QAS corner broke down. The ball was quickly launched forward to Natalie Thomas on the halfway line, who played a clever first-time layoff to fellow striker Jessica Halfpenny. At full speed Halfpenny left the defence in her wake to find herself one-on-one with keeper Belinda Kitching. Her shot from the edge of the box was well blocked by Kitching but the rebound fell nicely for Halfpenny to have a second crack — this time a simple slot into the net from 11 metres.

Before half-time SA's deadly Sharon Black had her 22 metre effort parried against the post. Then from a Queensland corner deep past the far post, Dunne could only watch as her 10 metre volley was cleared off the line by sweeper Beverly Hollands. The rebound fell loose for Georgette Leake whose drive was stopped by Tracey Wheeler.

Two minutes into the second half and keeper Kitching won the one-on-one with SA's Black and made a good blocking save. Soon after, Kitching was again quickly off her line to clean up a similar duel against Karin Prince.

Prince was released in space again but her shot past the outcoming Kitching was scooped off the line by QAS defender Kate McShea.

Queensland finally had a chance of their own — April Mann with a close chance in stoppage time, but it was well saved by keeper Tracey Wheeler.

SASI: Wheeler, Hollands, Forby, Winn, Morris, Blacker, Black, Prince, Karp (O'Shea 80), Halfpenny, Thomas (Ruotolo 77).

QAS: Kitching, Whiddett (Stork 59), Gegenhuber, McShea, Videla (Short 77), Leake, Garven, Revell, Mann, Dunne (Cowell 88), Ferguson.

LOUISE BISBY VICS' STAR

VIC 4 SASI 1

A sensational victory for the Victorians in the late game on Sunday when they thrashed the QAS, one of last year's Grand Finalists.

Again Louise Bisby showed excellent form and she opened the scoring in the fourth minute with a beautiful lob that flew over the keeper.

However you can't keep Sharon Black out of the picture for too long and in the 13th minute the ace striker pulled one back for the Queenslanders.

But the home side meant business and they pressed hard and sure enough in the 21st minute Bisby was at it again with a pinpoint corner, which was met by Melissa Barbieri with a spectacular first-time volley.

The goals were flowing in this early period and in the 28th minute Victoria incredibly took the lead to 3-1 with Louise Bisby once again the creator, this time for Sivana Cosic, who got the vital touch.

The second half left off where the first finished with the Victorians on top with the brilliance of Bisby the difference.

Deservedly Bisby scored her second, to make it 4-1, with a free-kick that rocketed high into the net.

Luck seemingly deserted the QAS as they had a chance to pull it back to 4-2 but the superb Victorian keeper Emma Bracken kept it out late in the game.

VICTORIA: Bracken, Zacharopoulos, Walker, Digiammarco, McEvoy, Barbieri, Hamilton (Nolan 80), Bisby (Kilpatrick 90), Fitzgerald (Rea 75), Terek, Cosic (Leitch 66).

SASI: Wheeler, Hollands, Forby, Morris, Blacker (O'Shea 71), Karp (Stocco 71), Prince, Black, Moore (Ruotolo 42), Halfpenny (Winn 31), Thomas.

Victoria's Digiammarco: Another strong game at the back for the Blues.

Vics' Kathy Zacharopoulos (at back): Forms a formidable defence with Digiammarco.

VICS IN WITH A CHANCE

With the sensational results over the weekend it has set up a very exciting final Pool A round before the Top Four Finals series.

POOL A LADDER

SA 15
VIC 7
QLD 6

RACE ON FOR TOP FOUR

The race is on for the all important points this weekend with the last Pool B round to take place in Canberra leading into this season's Top Four finals series.

All three teams are still within reach of placing first or second in the pool, although in-form NSW look very comfortable with a current six point lead ahead of ACT and a far superior goal difference.

Fri 6 Feb 7pm ACT v NNSW
Sat 7 Feb 3pm NNSW v NSW
Sun 8 Feb 3pm ACT v NSW
West Belconnen Leagues Club, Hardwick Cres, Holt

Points Table
Pool B End Round 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
NSW	7	5	1	1	20	11	9	16
ACT	7	3	1	3	9	11	-2	10
NNSW	7	2	1	4	10	13	-3	7

FERGUSON FIRST SCHOLARSHIP

Queensland striker Alicia Ferguson is the first player to be selected for a coveted AIS scholarship and commenced her contract on 26 January.

In serving the best interests of the 16 year old, AWSA and the AIS made the early decision to allow Ferguson to settle in Canberra before school starts in a year where she will complete her Year 12 studies.

The remaining 19 full-time scholarship berths will be announced by National coach Greg Brown soon after the completion of the Ansett Australia Summer Series.

The AIS centralised program commences on 1 July.

Alicia Ferguson (L): selected for coveted scholarship.

Around the Globe

ENGLAND

PREMIER LEAGUE

Tony Cottee hit a surprise winner for Leicester in their 1-0 win over Premiership leaders Manchester United — inflicting the champions' first home defeat of the season. It was only United's seventh ever defeat at home in the Premiership since it began in the 1992/1993 season.

Both Liverpool and Blackburn were not able to capitalise on United's loss, drawing 0-0 at Anfield. Blackburn remain in second spot with 45 points, the same as third-placed Liverpool and Chelsea who beat Barnsley 2-0, with United top on 49 points.

Arsenal beat Southampton 3-0 at Highbury. All the goals coming in a five-minute spell in the second half, starting with Dennis Bergkamp, who hit the first in the 62nd minute, Tony Adams headed his first of the season five minutes later, and French import Nicolas Anelka nabbed the third moments afterwards.

Meanwhile Mark Hughes and Gianluca Vialli were on target for Chelsea in their 2-0 victory over Barnsley.

However the news was not so good for Chelsea's London neighbours Tottenham. Costa Rican striker Paulo Wanchope hit a winner for Derby in their 2-1 win over Tottenham. Dean Sturridge had opened the scoring for Derby but Tottenham's Ruel Fox equalised after good work from Jurgen Klinsmann moments into the second half. Then came Wanchope's low shot into the net in the 77th minute to win the match.

Leeds had an impressive 2-0 away victory at Crystal Palace. Rod Wallace, despite being on the transfer list, put Leeds ahead after just seven minutes and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink hit a second — his 12th of the season — three minutes later.

West Ham drew 2-2 with Everton, who twice came back from behind. Trevor Sinclair scored on his debut for West Ham after 10 minutes, Nick Barmby equalised before Sinclair added a second three minutes after the break. But France's Mikael Madar earned a second equaliser for Everton in the 60th minute.

Coventry more than doubled their tally of away goals in their 5-1 thrashing of Bolton Wanderers. Coventry, who prior to the match had only scored four goals away from home, eased home with goals from Noel Whelan, Darren Huckerby (2) and Dion Dublin (2), after former Newcastle and Leeds midfielder Scott Sellars had given Bolton a 21st minute lead.

Sheffield Wednesday drew 1-1 with Wimbledon, with Mark Pembridge opening the scoring for Sheffield and Michael Hughes hitting an equaliser for the Dons.

Arsenal	3	**Southampton**	0
Bergkamp 62			
Adams 67			
Anelka 67			
Bolton	1	**Coventry**	5
Sellars 21		Whelan 26	
		Huckerby 58,65	
		Dublin 73,79	
Chelsea	2	**Barnsley**	0
Vialli 23			
Hughes 47			
C Palace	0	**Leeds**	2
		Wallace 7	
		Hasselbaink 13	
Derby	2	**Tottenham**	1
Sturridge 25		Fox 46	
Wanchope 77			
Liverpool	0	**Blackburn**	0
Man Utd	0	**Leicester**	1
		Cottee 30	
Sheff Wed	1	**Wimbledon**	1
Pembridge 14		Hughes 72	
West Ham	2	**Everton**	2
Sinclair 10,48		Barmby 25	
		Madar 60	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	24	10	1	1	32	5	5	3	4	19	13	49
Chelsea	24	8	2	1	22	8	6	1	6	30	17	45
B'burn	24	8	3	1	30	12	4	6	2	14	12	45
L'pool	24	9	1	3	26	10	4	5	2	13	9	45
Arsenal	23	8	2	2	26	9	3	6	2	16	17	41
Derby	24	9	3	0	25	7	2	3	7	14	23	39
Leeds	24	5	3	4	17	14	6	2	4	17	13	38
West Ham	24	9	1	1	26	8	2	1	10	10	27	35
Leicester	24	3	7	3	13	11	5	2	4	14	11	33
S Wed	24	6	3	4	21	19	2	3	6	16	28	30
N'castle	23	6	3	4	15	14	2	2	6	9	15	29
Soton	24	7	1	4	19	14	1	3	8	7	19	28
Coventry	24	4	7	1	19	14	2	2	8	9	20	27
Everton	24	5	2	4	17	16	2	4	7	11	19	27
A Villa	23	5	3	3	17	15	2	3	7	9	18	27
Wimbledon	23	3	3	6	12	16	3	5	3	10	11	26
C Palace	24	0	4	7	7	20	5	4	4	14	14	23
Tot'ham	24	5	3	4	13	15	1	2	9	8	26	23
Bolton	24	3	7	2	10	12	1	3	8	11	28	22
Barnsley	24	4	2	5	12	20	2	1	10	8	39	21

DIVISION ONE

Charlton	0	Bury	0
Crewe	1	Norwich	0
Huddersfield	0	Swindon	0
Ipswich	2	Bradford	1
N Forest	1	Oxford	3
Portsmouth	1	Sheffield Utd	1
Reading	2	Birmingham	0
Stockport	2	QPR	0
Sunderland	4	Port Vale	2
Tranmere	0	Man City	0
Wolves	0	WBA	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
N Forest	29	11	2	2	33	16	6	4	4	14	12	57
Charlton	29	10	3	1	29	13	5	4	6	24	24	52
Sun'land	28	8	4	2	27	12	7	3	4	21	16	52
M'brough	27	8	3	2	24	9	7	4	3	20	15	52
Sheff Utd	29	10	4	0	27	11	3	8	4	18	20	51
Wolves	29	9	4	1	27	12	5	2	8	13	17	48
WBA	29	8	2	5	16	13	5	4	5	14	15	45
Stockport	29	9	4	1	30	13	4	1	10	18	28	44
B'ham	29	6	5	3	16	8	5	5	5	20	14	43
Swindon	30	9	3	3	24	14	3	4	8	10	27	43
Bradford	30	7	6	2	19	14	3	5	7	13	18	41
Norwich	29	7	4	4	16	18	4	2	8	13	23	39
Ipswich	28	5	4	4	15	13	4	7	4	20	17	38
Crewe	29	5	2	8	16	23	6	2	6	19	19	37
Reading	29	6	4	5	21	20	3	5	6	9	22	36
Oxford	29	6	4	4	18	14	3	2	10	18	29	33
QPR	29	6	6	3	16	12	2	3	9	14	31	33
Stoke	28	5	3	5	17	22	3	5	7	12	20	32
H'field	29	4	4	6	16	17	3	5	7	15	24	30
Man City	29	4	4	7	20	17	3	4	7	13	17	29
Port Vale	29	5	4	6	18	17	3	1	10	15	28	29
Tranmere	27	5	5	4	18	14	1	4	8	10	20	27
Bury	29	3	7	5	13	17	1	7	6	12	21	26
P'mouth	28	5	3	7	21	26	1	3	9	10	20	24

DIVISION TWO

Blackpool	0	Wigan	2
Brentford	3	Plymouth	1
Bristol C	1	Wrexham	1
Burnley	7	York City	2
Carlisle Utd	0	Wycombe W	0
Chesterfield	0	Watford	1
Gillingham	1	Bristol R	1
Grimsby	1	Fulham	
Luton	1	Bournemouth	2
Northampton	0	Oldham	0
Southend	0	Millwall	0
Walsall	1	Preston	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Watford	29	9	3	1	24	11	10	4	2	21	9	64
Bristol C	29	12	3	1	32	11	6	3	4	20	11	60
Oldham	29	10	4	0	31	13	1	8	6	12	18	45
Fulham	29	7	6	1	16	7	5	3	7	22	21	45
Bristol R	29	6	1	6	20	22	6	7	3	22	21	44
N'ampton	29	9	4	2	21	11	2	7	5	11	14	44
Grimsby	27	7	5	2	22	8	4	4	5	15	16	42
Ch'field	30	7	6	2	17	11	2	8	5	10	13	41
B'mouth	29	7	6	2	19	8	3	4	7	17	23	40
Gillingham	29	7	5	3	20	15	3	4	7	16	24	39
Millwall	28	5	4	5	17	16	6	2	6	16	19	39
York	29	8	2	4	20	13	1	9	5	16	26	38
Wrexham	28	5	6	2	18	15	4	5	6	15	19	38
Walsall	27	7	5	2	20	11	3	2	8	11	21	37
B'pool	29	8	4	3	22	17	2	2	10	14	29	36
Wigan	28	6	3	4	25	21	4	2	9	17	23	35
Wycombe	29	6	6	2	20	14	2	5	8	15	25	35
Preston	29	6	3	5	15	12	3	4	8	19	22	34
Luton	29	4	3	9	23	33	4	5	4	12	13	32
Carlisle	29	5	4	6	18	19	3	2	9	20	27	30
Burnley	29	6	7	2	23	14	1	2	11	10	25	30
Brentford	30	7	4	4	25	18	0	5	10	7	33	30
Plymouth	29	5	4	5	24	22	1	6	8	12	23	28
Southend	30	5	6	5	18	20	2	1	11	12	35	28

DIVISION THREE

Barnet	2	Cambridge	0
Darlington	1	Brighton	0
Exeter	2	Leyton O	2
Lincoln	1	Hull City	0
Mansfield	0	Notts County	2
Peterborough	1	Rotherham	0
Rochdale	0	Cardiff	0
Scarborough	1	Colchester	1
Shrewsbury	1	Chester	1
Swansea	1	Macclesfield	1
Torquay	1	Hartlepool	0
Doncaster	1	Scunthorpe	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
N County	30	8	4	2	24	14	11	4	1	29	15	65
Peterboro	29	10	3	2	31	12	4	7	3	22	17	52
Barnet	30	9	4	3	27	14	6	3	5	17	18	52
Scarboro	30	10	3	3	31	18	4	4	6	18	24	49
Ma'field	30	12	3	0	26	7	1	7	7	16	24	49
Chester	30	9	5	1	22	6	5	1	9	20	29	48
Rot'ham	30	7	4	3	30	23	5	7	4	18	16	47
Torquay	30	10	2	3	26	13	3	6	6	16	25	47
Exeter	30	6	8	2	25	15	5	5	4	21	19	46
Lincoln	29	6	5	4	19	19	6	5	3	15	16	46
Leyton O	29	8	3	3	25	11	4	5	6	15	15	44
Hartlepool	30	7	8	0	25	12	2	7	6	15	21	42
Colchester	30	9	3	3	25	16	2	5	8	23	32	41
Scunthorpe	29	5	4	5	16	18	6	2	7	18	20	3
Darlington	29	9	5	1	30	17	0	3	11	8	30	35
Mansfield	28	6	6	3	26	19	2	4	7	9	14	34
Cardiff	29	3	9	2	13	13	3	7	5	13	16	34
Cambridge	30	6	4	4	24	20	1	8	7	16	23	33
Shrewsbury	28	7	2	5	22	19	1	6	7	16	24	32
Swansea	30	5	5	5	16	12	4	0	11	15	30	32
Rochdale	30	8	2	5	23	11	1	1	13	9	30	30
Hull	30	6	4	4	27	22	1	1	14	13	32	26
Brighton	30	1	6	8	12	22	3	4	8	12	20	22
Doncaster	28	2	3	9	9	31	0	3	11	10	44	12

SCOTLAND

PREMIER LEAGUE

Dunf'line	3	**Kilmarnock**	2
Barnett 41		Vareille 2	
Smith 67		Roberts 85	
Shaw 76			
Hearts	2	**Dundee Utd**	0
Cameron 30,79			
Motherwell	6	**Hibernian**	2
Arnott 10		Crawford 4	
Weir 23		Lavety 8	
Garcin 43			
McCulloch 81,89			
Coyne 88			
St Johnstone	2	**Rangers**	0
O'Neil 36			
O'Boyle 69			

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	23	10	2	0	36	11	4	4	3	18	14	48
Hearts	23	8	1	2	27	16	7	2	3	24	14	48
Celtic	22	7	1	2	22	5	7	2	3	17	10	45
St Johnstone	23	5	2	5	14	16	4	3	4	12	13	32
Kilmarnock	23	5	2	4	14	16	3	4	5	13	24	30
Dundee U	23	4	4	3	18	10	2	3	7	14	26	25
Dunf'line	23	3	5	4	15	19	3	1	7	10	24	24
M'well	23	3	3	5	16	16	3	2	7	15	24	23
Aberdeen	22	4	4	4	14	14	1	3	6	9	22	22
Hibernian	23	4	3	5	20	17	0	3	8	8	25	18

DIVISION ONE

Ayr Utd	0	Raith R	0
Dundee	1	Hamilton	1
Falkirk	2	St Mirren	2
Partick	3	Morton	3
Stirling	2	Airdrie	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dundee	22	4	4	3	12	7	8	3	0	22	5	43
Falkirk	21	6	1	3	16	13	6	2	3	21	16	39
Raith	21	6	2	2	16	6	4	3	4	16	15	35
Airdrie	21	5	5	1	15	11	3	4	3	9	12	33
Hamilton	20	4	3	3	10	11	4	2	4	17	15	29
St Mirren	22	5	2	4	15	15	2	2	7	11	20	25
Ayr	20	4	1	6	19	19	2	3	4	7	13	22
Partick	22	2	2	6	17	23	3	5	4	12	14	22
Stirling	21	2	5	4	13	21	3	2	5	15	17	22
Morton	22	2	3	6	10	18	3	2	6	14	16	20

DIVISION TWO

Clyde	2	Brechin	2
Clydebank	1	Stenhousemuir	0
East Fife	2	Livingston	0
Forfar	2	Stranraer	1
Queen Sth	1	I Caledonian	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Clydebank	19	4	5	1	16	8	6	3	0	13	6	38
Livingston	18	6	1	1	16	9	3	5	2	13	11	33
Queen Sth	19	5	2	2	13	10	3	1	6	17	21	27
East Fife	20	4	1	4	17	19	4	2	5	11	17	27
Stranraer	20	5	3	3	23	16	1	4	4	9	15	
Forfar	19	3	3	4	20	20	3	3	3	15	14	24
Clyde	20	4	2	3	12	8	2	4	5	14	21	24
Stenh'muir	19	4	3	3	16	15	2	2	5	9	15	23
Inverness	19	4	5	2	21	11	1	2	5	16	17	22
Brechin	19	2	4	3	9	12	1	3	6	11	26	16

DIVISION THREE

Albion	3	Alloa	3
Arbroath	2	Dumbarton	2
E Stirling	1	Montrose	2
Queen's Pk	0	Cow'beath	4
Ross Cty	0	Berwick	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arbroath	20	7	2	2	27	14	5	1	3	16	10	39
Alloa	19	5	0	4	19	12	7	0	3	20	11	36
Ross Cty	19	5	1	3	26	13	5	3	2	17	11	34
E Stirling	20	7	0	3	21	11	4	1	5	10	17	34
Albion	19	6	1	1	16	7	3	2	6	17	27	30
Queen's P	21	4	2	4	17	15	3	5	3	12	11	28
Berwick	20	4	3	4	18	18	4	1	4	13	15	28
Dumbarton	20	0	5	5	8	15	4	2	4	19	20	19
Montrose	19	2	2	6	12	19	2	2	5	13	28	16
Cow'beath	19	2	1	7	5	19	2	0	7	6	19	13

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Around the Globe

ITALY

Brazilian Ronaldo's first goal in two months brought second-placed Inter Milan a vital 1-0 win at Brescia on Sunday to keep the pressure on Serie A leaders Juventus, 2-0 winners at Lecce.

Belgian international Luis Oliviera brought third-place Udinese's 10-match unbeaten run to a halt with a 75th minute winner in Fiorentina's 1-0 victory.

Dino Baggio's 67th minute winner lifted Parma into fourth place, two points behind Udinese and one ahead of Lazio.

Argentine Abel Balbo scored a hat-trick in AS Roma's thrilling 4-3 win over Empoli, the home side's first win in nine league and Cup matches.

Filippo Maniero, signed from Parma in midweek, marked his debut for AC Milan with an injury-time winner against Piacenza - Milan's first goal at the San Siro in 388 minutes of Serie A action.

Bologna	0	Atalanta	0
Brescia	0	Inter Milan	1
Fiorentina	1	Udinese	0
Lecce	0	Juventus	2
AC Milan	1	Piacenza	0
Parma	1	Bari	0
AS Roma	4	Empoli	3
Vicenza	1	Sampdoria	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	18	12	5	1	41	14	41
Inter	18	12	4	2	33	15	40
Udinese	18	10	4	4	33	26	34
Parma	18	9	5	4	32	19	32
Lazio	17	9	4	4	30	15	31
Fiorentina	18	8	6	4	37	20	30
AS Roma	18	7	8	3	31	21	29
S'pdoria	18	7	7	4	35	31	28
AC Milan	18	7	6	5	21	18	27
Bari	18	6	4	8	15	24	22
Vicenza	18	6	4	8	20	34	22
Brescia	18	6	2	10	24	29	20
Bologna	18	3	8	7	23	27	17
Piacenza	18	3	8	7	14	22	17
Empoli	18	4	4	10	25	34	16
Atalanta	18	3	6	9	16	29	15
Lecce	18	3	2	13	13	36	11
Napoli	17	1	3	13	13	42	6

SPAIN

Compostela	2	Zaragoza	0
Merida	1	Espanyol	1
Valladolid	0	R Sociedad	4
Santander	0	Deportivo	1
Barcelona	2	Sp Gijon	1
Oviedo	0	Real Betis	0
Ath Bilbao	1	Salamanca	0
Mallorca	5	Tenerife	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	22	14	2	6	49	34	44
R Madrid	22	12	7	3	38	22	43
R Sociedad	23	11	9	3	37	19	42
A Bilbao	23	10	9	4	31	24	39
A Madrid	22	10	7	5	46	28	37
Mallorca	23	9	8	6	34	20	35
Espanyol	23	8	10	5	28	16	34
Celta Vigo	22	10	4	8	31	27	34
Real Betis	21	9	7	5	28	25	34
Deportivo	23	6	11	6	24	24	29
Oviedo	23	6	11	6	23	26	29
Zaragoza	23	7	8	8	31	40	29
Valencia	22	8	4	10	31	29	28
Santander	23	7	6	10	25	32	27
Compostela	23	6	8	9	31	39	26
Salamanca	23	6	6	11	18	26	24
Merida	23	6	7	10	21	33	25
Tenerife	23	6	6	11	24	38	24
Valladolid	22	6	5	11	19	33	23
Gijon	23	0	3	20	20	53	3

GREECE

Panathinaikos	6	Panahaiki	1
Panionios	1	Kalamata	2
Paniliakos	3	Apollon	0
Iraklion	3	Proodeftiki	0
Ionikos	1	Veria	1
Athinaikos	0	Kavala	0
Iraklis	3	Ethnikos	2
Xanthi	2	PAOK	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	19	16	1	2	52	15	49
Ph'aikos	20	16	1	3	53	19	49
AEK Ath	19	15	2	2	40	17	47
PAOK	20	12	5	3	36	21	41
Ionikos	20	11	5	4	32	19	38
Iraklis	20	11	4	5	27	21	37
Iraklion	20	9	3	8	25	34	30
Xanthi	20	8	4	8	36	36	28
Apollon	20	7	4	9	21	29	25
Paniliakos	20	6	6	8	28	31	24
Panionios	20	7	2	11	26	28	23
Proodeftiki	20	5	4	11	20	37	19
Panahaiki	20	6	1	13	19	39	19
Veria	20	5	3	12	22	34	18
Ethnikos	20	5	1	14	14	30	16
Kalamata	20	4	4	12	13	28	16
Athinaikos	20	4	4	12	14	30	16
Kavala	20	3	4	13	22	39	1

PORTUGAL

A double strike from Nuno Gomes gave Benfica a 2-0 win over Vitoria Setubal and lifted them into joint second place in the Portuguese first division. It capped a good weekend for Benfica, and their Scottish manager Graeme Souness, as their two main rivals both slipped up.

Porto, who still hold a 13 point lead at the top of the table, lost 1-0 away to Belenenses, their first defeat of the season.

Vitoria Guimaraes drew 0-0 against Rio Ave. Guimaraes played aggressively in the final minutes but failed to break through Rio Ave's weakened defence.

Benfica	2	V Setubal	0
Maritimo	2	Leca	0
Guimaraes	0	Rio Ave	0
Salgueiros	5	Campomaiorense	2
Varzim	2	Estrela	2
Belenenses	1	Porto	0
Boavista	6	Academica	0
Farense	1	Braga	1
Chaves	3	Sp Lisbon	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	19	14	4	1	43	19	46
Benfica	19	9	6	4	28	17	33
Guimaraes	19	10	3	6	24	13	33
Rio Ave	19	9	5	5	26	21	32
S Lisbon	19	8	7	4	23	15	31
Maritimo	19	8	4	7	22	20	28
Salgueiros	19	7	6	6	26	22	27
Boavista	19	6	8	5	24	18	26
Leca	19	7	4	8	20	22	25
Estrela	19	6	7	6	22	24	25
Braga	19	5	9	5	25	26	24
Camp'rense	19	6	5	8	27	31	23
Setubal	19	5	6	8	20	22	21
Farense	19	4	9	6	22	26	21
Academica	19	4	7	8	15	25	19
Varzim	19	4	7	8	16	30	19
Chaves	19	4	2	13	16	31	14
Belenenses	19	2	7	10	11	28	13

GERMANY

Brazilian Giovane Elber scored in a record-breaking 11 seconds to spark Bayern Munich to a 3-0 win over bottom club Hamburg.

The victory moved Bayern to within two points of leaders Kaiserslautern as the Bundesliga got back into swing after a six-week winter break.

Kaiserslautern are on 46 points from 21 games after losing two valuable points in a 1-1 draw at Schalke 04.

Elber's strike for Bayern was the fastest goal in the Bundesliga's 35-year history. He shot his side ahead after colleting a pass from Mario Basler.

In other matches, sixth-placed Hansa Rostock crushed 17th-place 1860 Munich 3-0, Hertha Berlin moved up to ninth place with a 1-0 win over VfL Wolfsburg, Werder Bremen beat Arminia Bielefeld 2-1, and FC Cologne defeated Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-2.

Direct from Greece

102 League & Cup Games

Catch all the action from the Greek First Division & the cheers and tears from the Cup on

ANT 1

(Optus Vision)

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SOUTH AMERICA

— Compiled by Mario Etchart —

LIBERTADORES CUP READY TO FIRE!

RIVER PLATE AND CRUZEIRO FAVOURITES SAY THE EXPERTS

The Libertadores Cup, the most important competition at club level in South America, will kick off this week with the participation of 20 teams divided in five groups.

The current champion, Cruzeiro of Brazil, will begin its title defence in the second round.

Novelty value comes in the form of two Mexican clubs in this year's championship, yet they will have to face Venezuelan teams in a play-off to qualify for the first elimination round.

This new innovation is subject to the aproval of all the South American federation, but the consensus seems to be in favour of the Mexican clubs.

America and Guadalajara (Mexico) will play against Venezuela's Caracas F.C. and Atletico Zulia for the two berths in Group 2, where the other teams will be the Brazilians Gremio of Porto Alegre and Vasco da Gama or Palmeiras.

The Copa America was a championship reserved, in the past, for South American nations. However since 1993, the winner and runner-up of the CONCACAF Gold Cup have also been included.

The first round will be played between the first week of February and April 10. Three teams of each group will go through to the second round together with current champion Cruzeiro.

LIBERTADORES CUP GROUPINGS 1998

GROUP 1
America of Cali and Bucaramanga (C), Barcelona and Deportivo Quito (E).

GROUP 2
Gremio of Porto Alegre and Vasco or Palmeiras (BR). The other two decided between Caracas and Atletico Zulia (V) and America and Guadalajara (M).

GROUP 3
Universidad Catolica and Colo Colo (CH), Olimpia and Cerro Porteno (P).

GROUP 4
Bolivar and Oriente Petrolero (B), Penarol and Nacional (U).

GROUP 5
River Plate and Colon of Santa Fe (A), Alianza Lima and Sporting Cristal (PE)

A:Argentina, P:Paraguay, PE:Peru, U:Uruguay, B:Bolivia, C:Columbia, E:Ecuador, BR: Brazil, V:Venezuala, M:Mexico, CH: Chile

The second qualifying round will be played from the 15th to the 29th of April and the quarter-finals will be played on May 6 and 25, the semi-finals on July 16 and 22 and August 12 and 26 has been set aside for the Finals.

For the first time in its 38 year history the Libertadores Cup will be named after a major sponsor. In this case it will be the Japanese motor company Toyota, who have paid A$10 million for the rights.

Six former champions, Gremio of Brazil, Penarol and Nacional, both from Uruguay, Olimpia of Paraguay and River Plate of Argentina plus newcomers, Bucaramanga of Colombia, Argentina's Colon, Atletico Zulia from Venezuela or America and Guadalajara from Mexico will take part in the championship (see groupings left).

It will mark also the return of Colombian club America, runner-up in this competition four times.

This year's tournament should be absolutely brilliant given the quality of sides involved.

Let the games begin in one of the world's most prestigious competitions.

As for the winner, see below for ABSW's prediction ...

BIG BOSSES DECIDE SALAS' FUTURE

SERIE A THE LIKELY OPTION

The future of Chilean international striker Marcelo Salas, who currently plays for Argentine champion River Plate, will be decided during a meeting in Sao Paulo between officials of River Plate and Italian club Lazio.

Fredo Davicce and Cesar Travesone for River Plate will meet Lazio's President Sergio Cragnotti to finalise the future of the 1997 'South American Player of the Year' (due shortly in Australia for the Four Nations tournament).

The Argentines are willing to let Salas go for A$30 million while Lazio is offering around A$24 million.

According to unofficial sources the agreement is close to being finalized and Marcelo Salas will join Lazio immediately after the end of the 1998 World Cup.

Until then the prolific striker will continue to play for River Plate in the local league and in the Libertadores Cup (see story left).

"I'm not involved in the negotiations. The only thing I know is that I wll leave River Plate after the World Cup," said Salas.

Meanwhile River Plate's coach Ramon Diaz is not concerned about the departure of his favourite forward.

> "The only thing I know is that I will leave River Plate after the World Cup."
>
> ... Marcelo Salas on his impending transfer situation.

" I'm not worried about Salas going to Lazio. He is a great player and we have no right to interfere in his future. We already have signed Colombia star Ramon Angel and we are interested in another two strikers from local clubs: Andres Guglieminprieto and Marcelo Gomez. I'm sure we will find the right replacement for Marcelo," said a nonchalant coach of River, former great Ramon Diaz.

One thing is for certain, if Salas scores the goals that he is capable of in the World Cup he will be able to choose any club in Europe. His transfer will no doubt be one of the biggest stories in the next few months and here at ABSW we will do our best to give you the latest on this.

Meanwhile in other news ... there has been a suspension of the South American Supercup for 1998, the reasons cited being that there are too many commitments for players in this, the year of the World Cup.

This is understandable given that Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Paraguay will be involved in the World Cup, as well as the various club games their players have.

The decision was made by the South American Football Confederation just recently.

RIVER'S CHAMPAGNE TO FLOW AGAIN?

River Plate in celebration mode. Will this be the scene again this year? ABSW predicts ... YES!

Italian Affair

By Joe Russo

BAGGIO'S DUMMY SPIT

Serie A strugglers Bologna have unfortunately made the headlines for all the wrong reasons. In recent times it seems that coach Renzo Ulivieri and star player Roberto Baggio haven't exactly seen eye-to-eye.

A couple of weeks ago, before the home clash with Juventus, Ulivieri left Baggio on the bench, although his form for the side this season has been commendable right from the start. Ulivieri, in attempting to justify his actions, didn't hold water with the player once known as the 'divine ponytail'.

Baggio decided not to sit on the bench for the game and went home instead.

Roberto Baggio: Has been benched yet again, this time at Bologna.

A couple of days after the incident he apologised for his actions but, by then, things had started to sour.

The coach handed in his resignation, he was heckled by Bologna supporters, but after 24 hours of convincing by the club president, he reconsidered and remained.

Now, a question mark must be placed upon Roberto Baggio's future at the club. Some sections of the Italian media have already speculated that he will not be in the Serie A next year (as reported in ABSW last week), and that an overseas move is imminent.

It is fairly hard to comprehend how a player like Baggio could not possibly be good enough to play for Bologna, if anything, he has been the form player for the side this year.

Baggio himself isn't exactly new to the game when it comes to falling out with the coach. The most memorable parting of the ways was with the former AC Milan, and national coach, Arrigo Sacchi.

Their rapport soured during the 1994 World Cup, and it was still evident last year when Sacchi returned to take over the helm of Milano.

Recently Baggio has stated that it was his dream to play again in the World Cup, but that dream must now be something of a distant memory.

On the positive side for him (if there is one) is the fact that the latest national coach, Cesare Maldini, keeps in regular contact. Whether or not this means he is still in the calculations for France 98 remains a moot point.

AZZURRI VICTORIOUS

Last Wednesday evening, in the Sicilian City of Catania, Italy defeated Slovakia 3-0 in a friendly international. It was a convincing showing by the Azzurri against one of Europe's minnows.

An own goal, from Fabbrizio Ravanelli's shot, put them ahead. Italy's second came courtesy of Alessandro Del Piero, while Chelsea's Roberto Di Matteo iced the cake with the third.

Just what coach Maldini will have learnt from this game remains a mystery – there are still about five months to go before France 98.

And finally, one player who was missing was Roberto Baggio. While much cannot be read into his omission at this stage, however, it may be indicative of Maldini's thinking for the Finals?

SOUSA FOR INTER

Inter have decided to strengthen their line-up and have purchased Portugese international Paolo Sousa from Borussia Dortmund following a recent loss to Bari and a draw with Empoli.

Sousa is no stranger to the Serie A, having played a couple of recent seasons with Juventus. While he never set the world on fire in Turin, he was a reliable and consistent midfielder.

ITALIAN CUP

There were no surprises in the return legs of the quarter-finals of the Italian Cup.

AC Milan and Lazio were virtually certain to qualify given their convincing first-leg wins.

Juventus had the most difficult task and only qualified on the away-goals rule. The results were:

Inter 1 Milan 0
Lazio 2 Roma 1
Juventus 0 Fiorentina 0
Atalanta 1 Parma 1

The semi-finals appear very interesting with four of the major Serie A clubs participating. The two games, on a home-and-away basis, will be: Juventus v Lazio and Milan v Parma.

EURO 2000 PATH

The draw for Euro 2000, the European Nations Cup, was made recently. Italy has been drawn in Group One and their qualification path will not be the easiest.

The finals of Euro 2000 will be held jointly by Belgium and Holland.

Along with the Azzurri in Group One are Denmark, Switzerland, Wales and Belarus.

Denmark are past winners in 1992 and seem their most difficult adversary. Switzerland can never be underestimated either, and they would just cherish the opportunity of possibly upsetting their bigger and more famous neighbours.

With all due respect, Wales and Belarus should not prove too much of an obstacle but, then again, this is the Azzurri!

In recent World Cup qualifying games the Italians struggled against Georgia and those with longer memories will recall the 1966 World Cup and Italy's humiliating 0-1 loss to North Korea.

This weekend is Round 19 and the main game will be at the Delle Alpi Stadium in Turin between Juventus and Roma. Their first round clash ended in a 0-0 draw, but with Juve at home and in form, it could be difficult for the Romans.

The Lazio and AC Milan game back in Rome should be another great game with so many big names on show, and Roberto Baggio and Ronaldo face-off in the Inter v Bologna clash in Milan.

OTHER FIXTURES

Atalanta v Parma
Bari v Fiorenta
Empoli v Napoli
Piacenza v Vicenza
Udinese v Lecce

Greek News

By Andrew Akratos

Over the years readers have been the butt of many claims — alien abductions, the Loch Ness Monster, Elvis sightings etc. etc.

During the week one of the national newspapers in Greece claimed that in a private meeting between Dusan Bayevic (the going-going-still-here coach of Olympiakos) and star player Ilya Ivic, the player allegedly broke out into tears and

Ivic: Please forgive me!

begged his coach's forgiveness for the altercation between them that threatens to split the league leaders.

The player in question is outraged at the claim and legal proceedings may be in the pipeline.

***

Former star Stelios Manolas and recent signing Georgios Donis are having contrasting fortunes at AEK.

Manolas, the elder statesman of the team, is figuring very much in his coach's plans for Europe, where his international and European experience will be of vital importance to AEK's chances of reaching the Cup Winners' Cup Final in a few

Manolas

months time.

In contrast Donis has had little impact on the starting 11 and has had limited opportunities to prove himself.

Official word is that he is improving steadily but there is room for "mental and physical" improvement — a polite way of saying that he may not make the grade.

***

AEK received a nasty shock during the week with the release of a structural report on the condition of their stadium 'Nikos Goumbas'.

The stadium is one of the ones nominated to be used in the 2004 Olympics and it seems that around $7 million will be needed to effect the necessary upgrades.

At present, the Assistant Minister for Sport, Andreas Fouras, is locked in discussions with club president Laki Nikolaou and Managing Director Georgios Leontisidis, in order to determine the best way to put into motion the repairs on the 45,000 seat stadium.

***

With Greece qualifying for the European Under/21 Championships later this year, coach Yianni Kollias is keen to organise quality "friendlies" for his young charges. So far only Norway have come to the party with a game scheduled for early March.

Kollias is still interested in three more games to keep the edge that eliminated England during the qualifiers razor sharp.

***

Hristo Waziecha... record holder.

In the game against Apollon last week, the great striker scored two goals in PAO's 5-2 victory to finally claim the all-time scoring record for PAO, after equalling the record the week previously.

It was an emotional night for the Polish international as coincidence would have it, it was on a cold winter night seven years ago that he scored his first goal for Panathinakos on this very same ground. Talk about coming full circle.

***

In brief ... Dimitris Markos has been transferred to Kalamata ... Andreas Niniadis will miss the derby between Olympiakos and AEK ... Skonda-Xanthi star Petros Teggelidis has been linked to a move to England, with two clubs making enquiries ... former Kalamaria coach Nikos Alefantos has quit the club for non-payment of wages and will join Kalohori ... AEK stumble to an unexpected and embarrasing away 3-2 loss to Prodeftiki to allow Olympiakos (4-0 winners over Athinaikos) to claim top spot ... Aris seem to be putting recent problems behind them

Wazeicha

maintaining a two point lead in Division Two ... Defender Dimitri Afentoulis has moved from Kastoria to Ionikos ... and Demis Mkolaidis, Toni Savevski and Eurepidis Katsabas are likely to miss the Olympiakos-AEK derby next Monday.

***

The mother of all derbies comes to television this week as Antenna will show live the clash between Olympiakos and AEK in the wee hours of Tuesday morning (3am). The clubs currently occupy top and second spot in the league, are just a point apart and only a few kilometres separates their grounds in Athens.

Add to the explosive mixture the fact that Olympiakos are the defending champions and AEK are the current Cup Winners ... it just gets better and better!

Insofar as players are concerned the $64 question is whether or not Demis Nicolaidis will play after being out the last few weeks.

As one of the league's leading scorers Demis has a high profile but, should he play, and score, then the AEK faithful will elevate him to demi-god status! However, the league's leading scorer, Ilya Ivic, is in fine form for Olympiakos and their tussle alone will be worth the price of admission!

But on a sour note, tickets have been sold out for weeks and a furore has broken out amongst fans as Olympiakos jacked up the prices for the game — the matter quite possibly may reach the FA.

***

Lou Hristodoulou, the expat Aussie boy who found fame and fortune in the green jersey of Panathinaikos, has returned to the land of Oz.

After eight highly successful years in Greece Lou has decided to return home and has signed for the Adelaide Sharks. The only obstruction is his clearance from his old club to resume his career in the Ericsson Cup, which will luck will arrive even as you read this.

***

Transfers ... Peruvian ace Paolo Cominges is leaving PAOK for OFI ... Spiros Maragos is having ongoing contractual disputes at PAOK despite signing a new contract ... an as yet un-named Serbian midfielder has joined Panahaiki ... 'Samba' Sambanovic is leaving Olympiakos for Kansas City in the US but a replacement has already been signed ...

***

NEWS OF THE WEEK: Anghel Iordanescu has agreed to become the new national coach of Greece. His tenure will begin after France 98 and will most likely run to the next World Cup. More details next week ...

Weird & Wonderful

By Stuart Jones

1952 — 1953

This was one of the tightest races for the top spot. At the beginning of May Preston were top and had completed their campaign. Arsenal had one game left, a home clash with Burnley.

A win would be enough to give the Gunners the title on goal percentage. The lead-up had been enormous for the game. Preston defeated Arsenal in the penultimate round and were now on a European end of season tour. 51,586 people saw the away team take the lead in the eighth minute thanks to a deflected shot from Stephenson, however, a minute later Alex Forbes scored. Four minutes later Lishman converted a Roper cross to put Arsenal one up.

In the 26th minute Jimmy Logie made it 3-1, and after 74, Elliott scored for Burnley but there was no addition to the score after that and Arsenal won the title by 0.099 of a goal. Wolves finished third, three points adrift of the top sides.

At the bottom Derby County were relegated after collecting only 32 points. Stoke City amassed 34 and were also relegated, although Sheffield Wednesday, Chelsea, and Manchester City finished just a point ahead of them.

Division Two champions were Sheffield United, with Huddersfield runners-up. These two finished well clear of the rest, in fact fourth placed Plymouth finished 11 points behind the Blades. Meanwhile Barnsley had a very poor season, winning only five times, joining them in Division Three would be Southampton, who won only ten games.

Oldham took Division Three North by a point over Port Vale, and in the South it was Bristol Rovers (thanks in a big way to Geoff Bradford's 33 goals) who took top spot, with Millwall runners- up.

Port Vale had transferred to Division Three North and some pointed to their instant success as an indication of the relative strength of the Third Division South verses North. Accrington Stanley were bottom of the North, whilst Walsall took out that unwanted prestige in the South.

The FA Cup saw semi-finals between Blackpool and Tottenham and Bolton and Everton. 'Pool won 2-1 against the London side while Bolton got the better of their Merseyside opponents by four goals to three.

Such a large scoreline was pretty unusual for the latter stages of the FA Cup and no one should have expected that scoreline to be replicated in the final itself. The game was played in front of more than 100,000 people once more, and was one of the greatest finals ever.

The first goal was to Nat Lofthouse of Bolton. He shot from a fair distance and Farm in the Blackpool goal let it bounce right past him. With twenty minutes to go, and despite having lost fullback Bell early on, the Trotters were up 3-1 and the game looked all over. The second goal for Blackpool came from a Stanley Matthews cross, which was messed up by keeper Hanson, leaving an easy shot for Stan Mortensen to score his second.

A few minutes later he scored his hat-trick from a free-kick. With only a few minutes left Stanley Matthews beat the left fullback and crossed the ball low. Stan Mortensen had made a dummy run to the near post and this left Bill Perry with space right in the goal area, and he scored to give Blackpool the FA Cup. Sir Stanley Matthews, after two losers medals, finally got his hands on a winners medal and the Cup. To this day the final is known as the 'Matthews Final', although he himself humbly thinks it should be the 'Mortensen Final'.

The Southern League was another close affair. In early March Merthyr Tydfil had defeated Headington 1-0 and it looked like they were going to take the title once more, however they crashed to defeats in their following games and Headington eventually took the title on goal difference over the Welsh side. Weymouth were Headington's opponent in the Southern Cup Final and they were taken care of thanks to a goal in extra-time to Cyril Toulouse. Dartford had finished bottom of the League table and conceded 121 goals in 42 matches, gaining victories in only six of them and a single point from only five others.

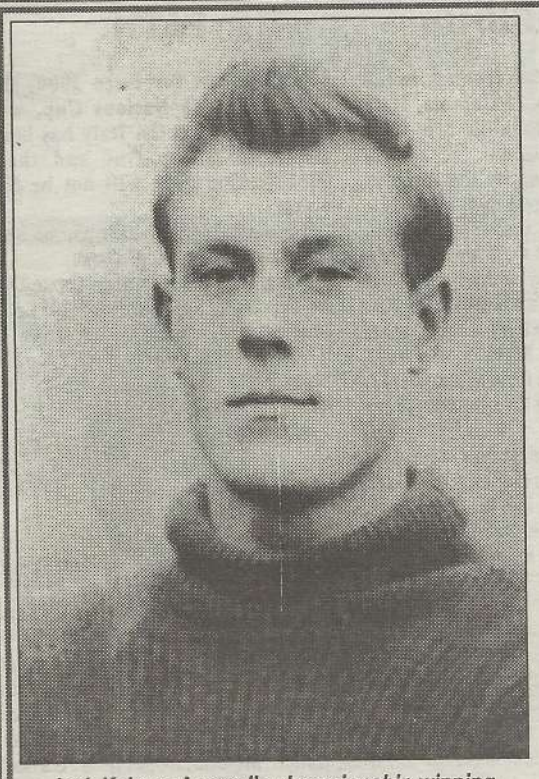
It was a season of close finishes in Scotland as well. Rangers finally got hands on trophies again as they took out the league on goal average over the other 'big' Edinburgh side, Hibernian. With two games in hand and four points behind Hibs at the start of May (Hibs having completed their fixtures), a 3-1 home win over Dundee and a 1-1 away draw at Queen of the South was just enough to give them the title. At the bottom Third Lanark and Motherwell were relegated, another three sides missing the second relegation spot by a single point.

Stirling Albion bounced straight back once more by outlasting Hamilton in the run in to top spot for the second flight of the league, although the 'Students' also went up as the second placed side. Albion Rovers finished well clear at the bottom of Division B.

In the League Cup Final Dundee defeated Kilmarnock 2-0 to successfully retain the Cup. The Scottish FA Cup saw Rangers and Aberdeen draw 1-1 in the final played at Hampden Park. On April 29, just four days after the first, the two teams lined up again and a goal from Rangers was all that separated the teams at full-time. Rangers had done the double once more.

Around Europe the Champions were:

Austria: FK Austria
Belgium: FC Liegeois
Bulgaria: Dinamo Sofia (Cup - Lokomotiv Sofia)
France: Stade de Reims (Cup - OSC Lille)
Germany - Eas: Dynamo Dresden
Germany - West: IFC Kaiserslautern (Cup - Rot-Weiss Essen)
Holland: RCH Haarlem
Italy: FC Internazionale
Poland: Unia Chorzow
Portugal: Sporting CP (Cup - Benfica)
Romania: CCA Bucuresti (Cup - Flamura Rosie)
Russia: Spartak Moskva (Cup - Dynamo Moskva)
Spain: CF Barcelona (Cup double)
Sweden: Malmo FF (Cup double)
Switzerland: FC Basel (Cup - BSC Young Boys Berne)



Jack Kelsey: Arsenal's championship winning keeper.

ENGLAND

LEAGUE TABLES

DIVISION 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	42	15	3	3	60	30	6	9	6	37	34	54
Preston	42	15	3	3	46	25	6	9	6	39	35	54
Wolves	42	13	5	3	54	27	6	8	7	32	36	51
WBA	42	13	3	5	35	19	8	5	8	31	41	50
Charlton	42	12	8	1	47	22	7	3	11	30	41	49
Burnley	42	11	6	4	36	20	7	6	8	31	32	48
B'pool	42	13	5	3	45	22	6	4	11	26	48	47
Man Utd	42	11	5	5	35	30	7	5	9	34	42	46
Sund'land	42	11	9	1	42	27	4	4	13	26	55	43
Tott'ham	42	11	6	4	55	37	4	5	12	23	32	41
A Villa	42	9	7	5	36	23	5	6	10	27	38	41
Cardiff	42	7	8	6	32	17	7	4	10	22	29	40
M'brough	42	12	5	4	46	27	2	6	13	24	50	39
Bolton	42	9	4	8	39	35	6	5	10	22	34	39
P'mouth	42	10	6	5	44	34	4	4	13	30	49	38
Newcastle	42	9	5	7	34	33	5	4	12	25	37	37
L'pool	42	10	6	5	36	28	4	2	15	25	54	36
Sheff Wed	42	8	6	7	35	32	4	5	12	27	40	35
Chelsea	42	10	4	7	35	24	2	7	12	21	42	35
Man City	42	12	2	7	45	28	2	5	14	27	59	35
Stoke	42	10	4	7	35	26	2	6	13	18	40	34
Derby	42	9	6	6	41	29	2	4	15	18	45	32

DIVISION 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheff Utd	42	15	3	3	60	27	10	7	4	37	28	60
Hudds'fld	42	14	4	3	51	14	10	6	5	33	19	58
Luton	42	15	1	5	53	17	7	7	7	31	32	52
Plymouth	42	12	5	4	37	24	8	4	9	28	36	49
Leicester	42	13	6	2	55	29	5	6	10	34	45	48
B'ham	42	11	3	7	44	38	8	7	6	27	28	48
N Forest	42	11	5	5	46	32	7	3	11	31	35	44
Fulham	42	14	1	6	52	28	3	9	9	29	43	44
B'burn	42	12	4	5	40	20	6	4	11	28	45	44
Leeds	42	13	4	4	42	24	1	11	9	29	39	43
Swansea	42	10	9	2	45	26	5	3	13	33	55	42
R'ham	42	9	7	5	41	30	7	2	12	34	44	41
Doncaster	42	9	9	3	26	17	3	7	11	32	47	40
West Ham	42	9	5	7	38	28	4	8	9	20	32	39
Lincoln	42	9	9	3	41	26	2	8	11	23	45	39
Everton	42	9	8	4	38	23	3	6	12	33	52	38
Brentford	42	8	8	5	38	29	5	3	13	21	47	37
Hull	42	11	6	4	36	19	3	2	16	21	50	36
Notts Cty	42	11	5	5	41	31	3	3	15	19	57	36
Bury	42	10	6	5	33	30	3	3	15	20	51	35
Soton	42	5	7	9	45	44	5	6	10	23	41	33
Barnsley	42	4	4	13	31	46	1	4	16	16	62	18

DIVISION THREE NORTH

Oldham Athletic 59, Port Vale 58, Wrexham 56, York City 53, Grimsby Town 52, Southport 51, Bradford 50, Gateshead 49, Carlisle United 49, Crewe Alexandra 48, Stockport County 47, Chesterfield 47, Tranmere Rovers 47, Halifax Town 47, Scunthorpe United 46, Bradford City 46, Hartlepools United 46, Mansfield Town 46, Barrow 44, Chester 37, Darlington 34, Rochdale 33, Workington 32, Accrington Stanley 27.

DIVISION THREE SOUTH

Bristol Rovers 64, Millwall 62, Northampton Town 62, Norwich City 60, Bristol City 59, Coventry City 50, Brighton & Hove Albion 50, Southend United 49, Bournemouth 47, Watford 47, Reading 46, Torquay United 45, Crystal Palace 43, Leyton Orient 42, Newport County 42, Ipswich Town 41, Exeter City 40, Swindon Town 40, Aldershot 39, QPR 39, Gillingham 39, Colchester United 38, Shrewsbury Town 36, Walsall 24.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Headington United 58, Merthyr Tydfil 58, Bedford Town 56, Kettering Town 54, Bath City 54, Worcester City 51, Llanelly 51, Barry Town 47, Gravesend & Northfleet 45, Gloucester City 43, Guildford City 42, Hastings United 41, Cheltenham Town 41, Weymouth 40, Hereford United 39, Tonbridge 33, Lovells Athletic 32, Yeovil Town 32, Chelmsford City 31, Exeter City Res 30, Kidderminster Harriers 29, Dartford 17.

SCOTLAND

DIVISION A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	30	18	7	5	80	39	43
Hibernian	30	19	5	6	93	51	43
East Fife	30	16	7	7	72	48	39
Hearts	30	12	6	12	59	50	30
Clyde	30	13	4	13	78	78	30
St Mirren	30	11	8	11	52	58	30
Dundee	30	9	11	8	44	37	29
Celtic	30	11	7	12	51	54	29
Partick T	30	10	9	11	55	63	29
Q South	30	10	8	12	43	61	28
Aberdeen	30	11	5	14	64	68	27
Raith	30	9	8	13	47	53	26
Falkirk	30	11	4	15	53	63	26
Airdrie	30	10	6	14	53	75	26
Mot'well	30	10	5	15	57	80	25
T Lanark	30	8	4	18	52	75	20

DIVISION B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Stirling	30	20	4	6	64	43	44
Hamilton	30	20	3	7	72	40	43
Qu Park	30	15	7	8	70	46	37
Kilmarnock	30	17	2	11	74	48	36
Ayr Utd	30	17	2	11	76	56	36
Morton	30	15	3	12	79	57	33
Arbroath	30	13	7	10	52	57	33
Dundee U	30	12	5	13	52	56	29
Alloa	30	12	5	13	63	68	29
Dumbarton	30	11	6	13	58	67	28
Dunfermline	30	9	9	12	51	58	27
Stenhousemuir	30	10	6	14	56	65	28
Cowdenbeath	30	8	7	15	37	54	23
St Johnstone	30	8	6	16	41	63	22
Forfar	30	8	4	18	54	88	20
Albion R	30	5	4	21	44	77	14

UK STORIES

By Micky Brock

Anyone who read last week's copy of ABSW will now know that West Ham United, from the English Premier League, has set-up two 'Schools of Excellence' here in Australia, and to this end, Chief Executive Office, Mr Peter Storrie and Youth Team Manager, Mr Tony Carr, made a lightning visit to check out the local scene.

While here last week, ABSW had the good fortune to catch up with them at Blacktown City (henceforth Blacktown Hammers), to chew the fat and chat about the fortunes of the club and the hopes for the future.

TONY CARR

"Can you give us a brief outline of what the 'Schools of Excellence' are all about and why Australia?"

"Basically, West Ham are investing in two clubs in Australia, one on the east coast (Blacktown) and one on the west (Kingsway Hammers in Perth) and through Gary Williams, the operations manager in Australia for us, we are hoping to discover, produce and coach a player that will go on to play in the Premier League in England for West Ham United. That is the ultimate aim but a lot of boys will benefit from the coaching and methods they will receive from the people we have put in place to work with the lads."

"West Ham has always been known as 'The Academy' and have produced some great players over the years, nevertheless, you must have been impressed with Stan Lazaridis to come out here and take on a responsibility such as this?"

"Obviously Stan has done very, very well. He came over straight from Australian football and established himself in the team and is now a full Australian international. Hopefully, we'll discover another one like him."

"Steve Mautone was with the club but perhaps wasn't the sort of player the Hammers were looking for?"

"No. It would be unfair to say that. 'Monty' did very well and Harry Redknapp, the manager, was very reluctant at that time to sell the young goalkeeper but he just felt that the transfer deal we got was well worth taking and, as you would know, every player has his price and Harry felt it was too good an offer to turn down and decided to let the boy go. It also meant he could get regular first team football that we couldn't offer him at West Ham at that time, so rather than have a reserve player that may have been a little unhappy, it was decided to sell him to Reading."

"How many Aussies are at West Ham these days?"

"Apart from Stan, we have three other Aussie boys at Upton Park: the two Coyne brothers — Jamie and Chris plus Richard Garcia, who has just come to us, has recently turned sixteen and is now full-time with us. He has done excellent since his arrival and has established himself in the U/18 youth side and done very, very well. Hopefully, he can follow in the footsteps of Stan."

"I remember going to the Boleyn Ground way back in the 60s and 70s (yes, I am that old!), and watching players like Moore and Hurst etc., but what ever happened to Clyde Best and 'Pop' Robson?"

" 'Pop' Robson is now Youth Director at Sunderland Football Club and I spoke to him in September, when we went there to play, and he's still got fond memories of West Ham and is still a Hammer at heart I feel, and is doing very well. Clyde is now back in Bermuda and is Director of Football. Another old boy is Clive Charles, John Charles' brother, who is the coach of the US national side. He came over to England in December and it was him who told me of Clyde and he said that he saw him lying on the beach reading a copy of my book (see 'Book Review' below). Mervyn Day, the goalkeeper, was manager of Carlisle United until recently, but is now the goalkeeper coach at Everton (regular readers of this column will know that Stuart Jones and I did a radio show with Merv on BBC Radio North on our last visit back to the 'Old Dart'). Another 70s boy was Pat Holland, who played in the 1975 FA Cup Final as you know, until about six months ago he was manager of Leyton Orient and was at Millwall with Billy Bonds as his No.2 before accepting a post as Director of Youth at Tottenham."

"I've mentioned this before with Hammers fans many times but in 1980, Trevor Brooking was tying up his boot laces, fell over, a gust of wind knocked him for six but the ball hit him on the head and won the FA Cup for West Ham against Arsenal!"

"Well some would say that but if you ask Trevor I think he'd say he jumped like a kangaroo and headed the ball like a bullet into the back of the net. **But the ball was down by his knees!** Well yeah, but that's Trevor's version anyway. We still see him at the ground on a regular basis and even though he is now a respected BBC football pundit, he was kind enough to write the forward in my book. When we started at West Ham we played together in the same youth side in the early 60s."

"What about the fans' favourite, Alan (McKnight-mare) McKnight?"

"He is actually playing non-league football these days for Collier Row and Romford, which just goes to show how far he has slipped down I'm afraid. He had a couple of bad games for us and he never recovered from that and the fans wouldn't let him. It's always difficult for a keeper, they only ever remember your mistakes."

"So what about some of the youngsters coming through?"

"Richard Garcia, the Aussie boy is doing well, and I'm hopeful he'll do well. We've got a couple of other likely lads. One young lad, from Newcastle, by the name of Michael Carrick, is a very good player and we've just offered him a two-year contract. Another is Joe Cole, an England international, who will come onto the staff this summer. He's an excellent player and one we hope will come through in the next couple of years. The future is looking good as far as the youth goes at West Ham at the moment."

"Finally, are there any moves to increase the capacity at Upton Park?"

"At the moment the West Stand, which is the main stand as you walk into the ground, will be demolished very shortly and a big cantilever stand will be put in its place, taking the capacity up to 36,000 all-seated. The problem we have with the East Stand is that there is a road behind and the council, at this stage, won't give us permission to make it any bigger. Probably the best we could hope for in the near future is a 36-40,000 all seater stadium."

"Tony Carr, thank you very much."

PETER STORRIE

"Peter, I touched on the subject of the 1980 FA Cup Final with Tony but we didn't mention some of the players in that winning side?"

"Most people remember Trevor Brooking of course, and Paul Allen (viciously brought down by Willie Young which would warrant an automatic ban these days), Frank Lampard (senior) is still involved with the club and many will remember Stuart Pearson, who is not travelling all that well at the moment due to illness and a few other problems. Alvin Martin is out at Southend and most of the others have branched out into different areas and are doing quite well."

"With the restrictions on the growth for the ground, if the scenario became reality and West Ham were in Europe every year, and support for the club grew out of all proportion and the capacity couldn't be increased further, would a move be considered?"

Micky Brock with West Ham legend Geoff Hurst.

"I think it's too late for that now, perhaps seven years ago, but now we've paid the money for two new stands and we're about to do a third one, so I think the days of moving have passed us by now. What we'll probably do is build the West Stand about 2-3 metres back from where it is now, which then allows us to possibly put something along the east side giving a total capacity around 39,000 and that would be about right for us I feel."

"Is it fair to say the West Ham fans are some of the most parochial in the country, certainly London?"

"Yes they are. We take an average 3-4,000 to every away game now and they really enjoy going and make enough noise to support the team and our home gates have been full every game so it has been great. They're good, they're noisy and they sing along. 'Bubbles' comes out as a regular of course and a night game at Upton Park, although an all-seater, it's still a special occasion."

"There was an incident last season where the fans caused a 'lock-in' by hanging around outside the ground after one game where they produced the legendary 'red card' for the board. Can you clear up a few misconceptions about that for us?"

"Sadly it's like a lot of things, it all came about because of misinformation. They thought that someone was trying to put $60 million into the club and it was the board that was stopping them, but this wasn't the case at all. The gentleman concerned was only prepared to put a small amount of money directly into the club, for a very, very high share percentage, and all the rest were just loans. When that was made clear to the supporters, they turned on another person but that's the way supporters are. They're behind one person and then another or they turn on the board. It's not reasonable to turn on the board of West Ham as over the past few years they have had a lot of forethought and a great deal of money has gone on transfers etc. Last season, we were the third highest 'net spenders' in Britain and we still maintain a great youth policy but, sadly, some of the results didn't go our way and that was mainly because of injuries. Now, the team is looking very strong and everyone is 100% behind them again."

"Kitson and Hartson were two sensational buys but, considering the youth set-up etc., there must be other players the club would like to see in the famous 'claret and blue'?"

"Of course we'll always be looking at what is available but the problem is that with an increasing number of players added to the squad, more and more cannot get a first team game and this leads to other problems. One case is that of Michael Hughes, who wanted to get away because he couldn't get into the side. There has to be a balance between the two as there is no point in having top class players who can't get into the side. We are looking at one or two players but in terms of transfer spending, no, it's all been spent after parting with almost $20 million (net) over the last 18 months and of course with that, the wage bill also increased, so there are no more funds for this season, apart from one or two things I'm looking at which may involve players coming and going."

"After a spate of signings were injured on the training pitch it used to be an old joke that players coming to West Ham had to 'survive' their first training session, and then be injured for a few months, before they could to go on and play for the first team?"

"It was a bit like that in the old days but now it's a very professionally run club with some of the top physios and medical advisers in the country. The period you're talking about we had a very unfortunate batch of problems, Richard Hall came and got a really unusual injury. Before that Simon Webster broke his leg in training on the first day but there's nothing in the world you can do about that, it just happens. There were one or two other injuries at that time also and so stories began."

Simon Webster: Broke his leg on the first day.

"Last question. As the Chief Executive, are you the man responsible for 'Super Sponge'?"

"(Laughing). No. That's run by the people behind the screens. My role is as Director of Football and has nothing to do with that side of things. **You've palmed that one straight off mate!** To be fair, a lot of people enjoy that and find it really amusing and some people don't. That's life."

"Peter, thank you for your time today and, hopefully, we'll see a lot more of you out here in the future."

"My pleasure and I'll be making the 'short flight' out here about three or four times a year from now on and I must admit I like the summer over here, but I'm glad we can sit and do these things in the shade ..."

Our sincere thanks to Peter Storrie and Tony Carr for their time. Both are a pleasure.

However the question remains: will Blacktown Hammers (east) or Kingsway Hammers (west) be the first to produce another player in the mould of **Stan Lazaridis?**

Book Review

By Tony Carr (West Ham United Youth Team Manager) & Stuart Prossor

Youth Soccer Coaching

Review by Micky Brock

Ho hum! Another book about training the kids, this one was written by Tony Carr, Youth Team Manager for the Hammers.

West Ham has always been known as 'The Academy' because of the brand of football and the players they've produced.

Oh well, best have a look then...dum-di-dum. Hang on a minute! This isn't half bad. In fact, it's really very good.

When reading through the pages of this particular tome, the above few lines should never even enter the mind.

Messrs Carr and Prossor have put together here a detailed study of training methods and physical exercise that would certainly enhance the technique of today's youngsters.

Not only do we look at the often forgotten training practice of 'pass and move' but we progress to cover the full gamut of essential practices if you would care to make it as a footballer (of the correct variety that is).

Tony Carr was himself, along with West Ham stalwart Trevor Brooking, fortunate enough to have been under the guidance to two of England's finest coaches — Ron Greenwood (who later went on to manage England) and John Lyall.

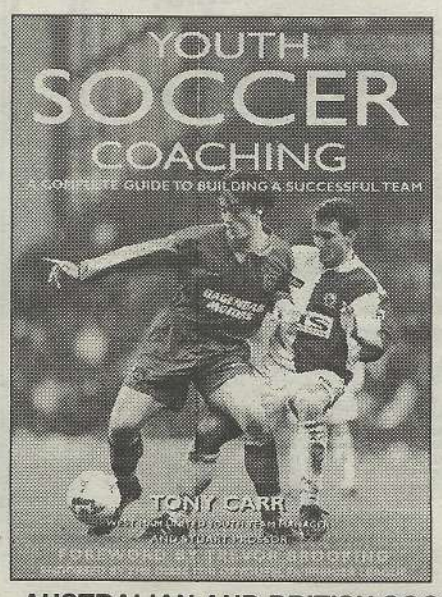
West Ham have a tradition of fine attacking football, regardless of circumstance, and playing the beautiful game the way it was meant to, so anyone who uses this book as a guide to aiding their players or themselves will not be disappointed.

Not just full of great tips and techniques but, as training manuals go, full of good banter too.

Published by Ward Lock, it is available here in Australia and is being distributed by New Holland Publishing of Sydney.

It's an excellent addition to the bookshelf for all aspiring players, youth team coaches and the odd official too I'll wager.

Recommended fully.



Coca Cola Cup Special

MERSON SHOCKS 'POOL

Liverpool. . . . . 2 Redknapp 31, Fowler 82
Middlesbrough . . 1 Merson 29

Robbie Fowler finally came up trumps for Liverpool when he broke Middlesbrough's brave resistance at Anfield with just nine minutes left of a frustrating Coca-Cola Cup semi-final first leg.

Paul Merson had shocked Liverpool with a superb low strike from outside the penalty area in the 29th minute but Jamie Redknapp produced the perfect response, within two minutes, when he unleashed a 25-yard drive past Mark Schwarzer.

Liverpool attacked incessantly throughout the second half but Boro defended stubbornly until Fowler, who had a miserable night, was on the edge of the six-yard box to fire home a cross from wonder-boy Michael Owen.

Middlesbrough were determined to keep alive their hopes of a second consecutive appearance in the final of this competition and set themselves up for a third Wembley outing in two seasons.

There were suggestions that because their unquestioned priority is winning back their place in the Premiership they would hold back in the first-leg of their semi-final at Anfield. Try telling that to Liverpool, who had their work cut out to hold them while trying to carve out openings for themselves.

Liverpool were equally determined to set themselves up for their eighth appearance in the final of the League Cup competition. They had won five of the previous seven — a record they share with Aston Villa.

But they took nothing for granted against Boro, who have become experts in Cup football over the past two campaigns. This was their 25th game in the FA and Coca-Cola Cups over this period.

Liverpool knew that the visitors, although much changed since the departures of foreign stars Juninho, Ravanelli and Emerson following their relegation from the Premiership, still command respect. They looked back little more than a year ago to a quarter-final at the Riverside, when they were strong favourites, but were beaten 2-1.

Middlesbrough went on to reach the final, but they lost that one in a replay to Leicester and were also beaten at Wembley in the FA Cup final by Chelsea. They had the disappointment of a home defeat by Arsenal in the fourth round of the FA Cup and manager Bryan Robson had stressed that promotion from the Nationwide League was the priority.

But his opposite number, Roy Evans, said that any team who had reached the last four of the competition, and were in sight of Wembley, had to take the game seriously. Robson showed he did when he recalled a number of his experienced performers who missed the Arsenal defeat.

Robbie Fowler (who kicked off his Liverpool career in spectacular fashion in the early stages of this competition in 1993 with a goal at Fulham on his debut and five at Anfield in the return), is desperate for something to boost his confidence. But he could not have felt very good about his first touch of the ball, failing to control it and allowing Nigel Pearson to clear.

Middlesbrough threw down the gauntlet almost immediately, attacking swiftly down the left and forcing David James to race out of his penalty area to kick clear.

Liverpool responded and Paul Ince struck a low shot that Mark Schwarzer saved comfortably and Jason McAteer sent a long-range effort high over the bar.

Merson, still a class act despite moving down from Arsenal to the Nationwide League, had Liverpool struggling from his free-kick. He found Neil Maddison rising beyond the far post and the home team and their fans were relieved to see his header go wide of the other post.

Then that teenage sensation Michael Owen threatened to give Liverpool the lead in spectacular fashion. He picked up the ball and ran at the defence before unleashing a fierce shot with his right foot from outside the penalty area. Schwarzer flung himself to his right as the ball flashed just wide.

Owen again created danger with a run and low cross from the left. He found Ince who could not get enough power into his shot to cause too much trouble for the diving Schwarzer.

Cue Merson. The 29-year-old was considered something of a risky investment at $9 million, with Arsenal receiving a further $1 million if Middlesbrough are promoted, particularly when there were early fears about him settling in the north east.

But he is proving a bargain and is staking a strong claim for a place in Glenn Hoddle's England squad for the World Cup Finals in France in the summer. Evans and his Liverpool players singled him out as the main threat, and they were right to do so. Craig Hignett, once a Liverpool reserve, sent the ball forward and Liverpool's back-line were completely taken out of the game as Merson raced away to smash the ball with his right foot past James.

He was also delighted to score against his old club Arsenal, even though Middlesbrough were beaten. In this game there were more joyous celebrations for his 12th goal of the campaign as he was mobbed by his team-mates.

Middlesbrough were performing with such confidence that Liverpool looked in serious trouble. But two minutes later Redknapp produced a spectacular reply.

Owen played a short pass to him, Redknapp looked up and, from 25 yards, delivered a right-foot power-drive that left Schwarzer grasping thin air.

It was the fifth goal of the season for Redknapp, who had a long wait to get his campaign started after suffering a broken ankle on England duty against South Africa last May.

The tension got to the players at times. Dominic Matteo was shown the yellow card for pulling back Merson as the Middlesbrough dangerman threatened to break down the left. Then Vladimir Kinder was booked for a foul on Owen.

However Steve McManaman introduced a note of light relief, taking off his jersey after being pulled back by Middlesbrough teenager Steve Baker.

Until his goal Fowler's confidence was so low that there were times when was incapable of continuing passing movements. Early in the second half he managed to make contact near goal but he had to stoop to make a header and the ball dropped for Schwarzer to make an easy catch.

CHELSEA CLING ON AGAINST GUNNERS

Arsenal . . . . . 2 Overmars 23, S Hughes 47
Chelsea . . . . . .1 M Hughes 68

Chelsea hung on for grim death in the Coca-Cola Cup, and may yet discover that life is indeed sweet, in the second leg of this London semi-final thanks to a revitalising goal from Mark Hughes.

Then again, they may only find that their emergence from intensive care has merely prolonged the agony, because for much of the night they were a dismal second-best to Arsenal.

The match turned on two moments — both only 60 seconds apart — which epitomised the best and worst in the art of goalkeeping.

Chelsea were on the ropes in the 68th minute, 2-0 down and looking like they had given up the ghost.

Nicolas Anelka, who helped make Arsenal's second goal for Stephen Hughes, found Emmanuel Petit, whose cushioned volley set up deadly Dennis Bergkamp. The Dutchman's shot was vicious but fellow countryman Ed de Goey flung out his right arm to parry brilliantly.

The play seemed magnetically drawn upfield from that instant and before the Arsenal faithful had retaken their seats, Gianfranco Zola made his first and last significant contribution by hoisting over a cross from the left touchline.

The home defence were leaden-footed and Alex Manninger made a hash of punching clear — something which Mark Hughes treated with his normal lack of forgiveness.

Now Chelsea will be able to re-introduce Roberto Di Matteo and Frank Leboeuf (both were away on international duty) in three weeks time, while Arsenal will probably be without their Man-of-the-Match Marc Overmars, as the flying Dutchman intends to be at a training camp in Florida with the Dutch national squad .

How Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger must thank the Lord for Dennis Bergkamp's aversion to flying, otherwise this semi-final would be on the verge of tilting crazily back in the favour of a team that was badly piloted on the field by Ruud Gullit.

It was his glaring error midway through the first period which highlighted Chelsea's ineptitude and gave Arsenal a deserved advantage through Overmars.

The Coca-Cola Cup has been a quixotic beast for Gullit this season, and the strange relationship he enjoys with this competition was about to continue.

Two rounds ago he had a right old stinker against Southampton, admitting afterwards that he had been one of the worst performers on the pitch before revealing that he had been up all the previous night with the birth of his daughter.

The Blues progressed that night, only for an injury to Andy Myers to demand that Gullit then come on from the bench in the next game against Ipswich, despite labouring under the effects of flu.

They won both — and this semi-final may still hold something for Chelsea, but there were enough moments to undermine Gullit's current demand for a new playing contract to go with the new managerial deal over which he is dallying.

There seemed no danger when Petit looped his left-footed effort up into the night and down towards Gullit, who desperately needed to clear. But he misjudged the flight and back-headed into territory where Overmars could reach the ball before de Goey.

The winger judged his task, let the ball bounce once and then slid the ball under the keeper for his fifth in six games.

Gullit's embarrassment was adequately displayed when he immediately charged upfield, temporarily swapping positions with Bernard Lambourde in midfield. But his true recompense did not come until after the half-hour when he blocked a goalbound Hughes shot.

What transpired was that it was to be a night when a younger generation from Holland was to shine.

Overmars erupted past defenders while Bergkamp looked as though he is utterly in command of his repertoire once more.

Prior to the opening goal he had risen majestically to an Overmars cross, which eluded Gullit, and went over de Goey but off the top of the bar.

An edge arrived in the play and Graeme Le Saux can be grateful that the battle he and Gilles Grimandi conducted all evening did not result in his sending-off in the second half for raised hands after each had been booked for fouling the other.

Arsenal were truly reaching top gear and why Chelsea's Hughes had to wait so long to come off the bench was a little mysterious because so much was lacking in Chelsea's heart and guts, attributes that he and Gianluca Vialli have plenty of.

The second Arsenal goal had been so splendid, immediately the match re-started after the break, that the game could have been beyond them.

Overmars started a move and Anelka, as he had in the FA Cup at Middlesbrough on Saturday, helped create a flowing goal.

He flicked a deft pass to Overmars again who burst to the byline and then bamboozled the Chelsea defence with a slow cut back.

Stephen Hughes ran onto it and finished with a vicious, confident power shot. It looked all over for the visitors.

Tore Andre Flo had seemed intelligent and eager but not penetrative, but Hughes changed everything within nine minutes of arriving.

Even before the final whistle brought respite, and the news that Frank Sinclair's injury is not only not serious but will not prevent him nipping off to play for Jamaica for a fortnight, Arsenal could have increased their lead.

Strangely de Goey now seems like a genuine loss for the second-leg, so well did he finish the match, but he too will head off for the States to join Overmars in the Dutch get together.

His finest actual save, apart from the vital nature of preventing Bergkamp making it 3-0 before Hughes scored, was when Petit hit a vicious drive for the top corner with less than 20 minutes left.

For a bulky, big man de Goey moved like lighting and punched the effort away spectacularly.

He then put icing on the cake with a rather showy stop from Bergkamp who had eased into the box and attempted to curl the ball round his countryman.

It was not to be and nor was winning the semi-final in the home leg — now a tie which had seemed beyond Chelsea may now be back within their tentative reach.

Much about their entire remaining season will hinge on how they use their hard-earned second life.

(Second-leg matches commence from February 16)

Robbie Fowler: Scored Liverpool's winner.

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WORLD STOP PRESS

FOSTER 3 CHILE 1

A Hong Kong league side beat Chile in the second game of the four-nation Carlsberg Cup tournament.

A hat-trick from the Hong Kong League XI's Paul Foster put the home side into the final against World Cup hopefuls Nigeria.

Foster has twice won the 'Golden Boot' award for the Hong Kong league's highest goalscorer and has also put the ball beyond the grasp of the Anderlecht and Tottenham Hotspur goalkeepers in the past.

The Hong Kong League Xl is made up of the best players, irrespective of nationality, in the domestic competition, as opposed to the actual national side, but it proves that Paul Foster, brother of Portsmouth and Australia star Craig, perhaps is one player who 'slipped through the net' for Australia.

In the first game of the tournament Nigeria beat Iran 1-0.

FOURTH OFFICIAL?

World football's ruling body FIFA is set to ratify the use of a fourth official in matches when the International Board meets on March 6.

FIFA secretary general Sepp Blatter, in Paris for the inauguration of the Stade de France, said the additional official's main role would be to take some pressure off the referee by logging the yellow and red cards as well as substitutions.

The International Board will also consider a proposal to allow one of the two referees' assistants onto the pitch to ensure defensive walls are far enough back at free-kicks.

This would enable the referee to take up a better position to spot fouls in the penalty area, Blatter said.

If approved the proposals will be introduced after the World Cup Finals tournament between June 10-July 12 this year.

PELE THE STATESMAN

Pele is ready to try his hand as a statesman. Brazil's greatest player accepted an invitation from left-wing law makers to travel to Cuba in an attempt to reduce long-standing tensions between the communist Caribbean island and the United States.

"If it is for peace, I will go to Havana," said Pele, who is currently Brazil's sports minister.

He said he would have no problems getting in touch with President Bill Clinton to talk about Cuba. Pele and Clinton kicked a ball about together in a Rio de Janeiro shanty-town, a highlight of the U.S. leader's recent state visit to Brazil.

"After the football lesson I gave him, I'm sure he will give me his help," Pele added.

Aides said they would be contacting Brazil's Foreign Ministry to ask for help in organising the visit later this year.

DUTCH KEEPER FOR PROTEAS

Champions South Africa named Dutch goalkeeper Hans Vonk in their provisional African Nations Cup squad.

Vonk was born in South Africa 26 years ago, of Dutch parents, but left the country at the age of two. He plays for last season's Dutch Cup runners-up SC Heerenveen.

He was contacted by South African officials after first choice goalkeeper Brian Baloyi was blamed for the goal which allowed unfancied Namibia to humble the World Cup finalists in a Cosafa Castle Cup first round match in Windhoek.

Sono also announced a return for 32-year-old midfielder John Moshoeu, who was the hero of South Africa's win at the last African Nations Cup Finals in 1996. Moshoeu recently signed for Turkish league leaders Fenerbahce in a $2.6 million move.

Captain Lucas Radebe, injured for the Namibia match on Saturday, and winger Helman Mkhalele return to the squad as does uncapped midfielder Alex Bapela (from league leaders Mamelodi Sundowns).

Sono will omit three players on the eve of the team's departure for Burkina Faso.

Goalkeepers: Brian Baloyi (Kaizer Chiefs), Simon Gopane (Bloemfontein Celtic), Hans Vonk (SC Heerenveen, Netherlands)

Defenders: Mark Fish (Bolton Wanderers, England), Willem Jackson (Orlando Pirates), Themba Mnguni (Mamelodi Sundowns), Aaron Mokoena (Jomo Cosmos), David Nyathi (St Gallen, Switzerland), Andrew Rabutla (PAOK Salonika, Greece), Lucas Radebe (Leeds United, England)

Midfielders: Alex Bapela (Mamelodi Sundowns), Quinton Fortune (Atletico Madrid, Spain), Helman Mkhalele (Kayerispor, Turkey), Jabu Mnguni (Vaal Professionals), John Moeti (Orlando Pirates), Thabo Mooki (Kaizer Chiefs), John Moshoeu (Fenerbahce, Turkey), Dumisa Ngobe (Orlando Pirates), Brian Sebapole (Jomo Cosmos), Brendan Silent (Orlando Pirates)

Forwards: Brendan Augustine (Linzer ASK, Austria), Thabang Lebese (Kaizer Chiefs), Phil Masinga (Bari, Italy), Benedict McCarthy (Ajax Amsterdam, Netherlands), Pollen Ndlanya (Bursaspor, Turkey)

GOVERNMENT BACK 1999 COPA AMERICA

Paraguayan President Juan Wasmosy promised that his government would provide backing for the Paraguayan Football League to stage the 1999 Copa America.

There had been doubts over the country's capacity to host the event and Colombia had offered to step in.

President Wasmosy was one of 3,000 people due to watch the opening of the new South American Confederation (CSF) headquarters in Asuncion.

The $3.5 million building is set in an area of 42,000 square metres and features a three-metre in diameter football.

Among the guests at the opening were FIFA president Joao Havelange who retires in June, his general secretary Sepp Blatter and UEFA president Lennart Johansson, a candidate to replace Havelange.

Blatter refused to comment on whether he would stand as a successor to Havelange.

UAE ALLOWS FOREIGN PLAYERS

The United Arab Emirates will lift its 17-year ban on foreign players in the local soccer league from next season.

The minister of information and culture, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid al-Nahayan, told a press conference that the move was the first in a series of steps to raise the quality of league football, local newspapers reported.

Sheikh Abdullah, who is also chairman of the UAE Football Association, said private sector backing was expected to help finance the cost of foreign players.

Clubs wanting to hire foreign players would have to submit an application to the football association for consideration, the papers said.

BUNDESLIGA GLOWING?

The German First Division faces serious disruption if plans to transport nuclear waste across the country in March get the green light.

Police in Dusseldorf say they will be too busy protecting the waste from demonstrators to have anyone to spare for six matches in the Bundesliga, which means the games would have to be cancelled.

German Football Federation officials are attempting to reach a compromise with the police to try and prevent the matches being called off.

But Dusseldorf police spokesman Frederick Holtkamp insisted there would be no compromise.

"We warned the football federation last year. When there is nuclear waste being transported we have no police to spare for football. We have suggested they change the date of the fixtures," instructed Holtkamp.

Officials plan to move the waste on March 20 and 27.

SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND

The Football Association unveiled plans to double their revenue by generating $100 million over the next four years from a massive sponsorship package.

The England team and the prestigious FA Cup will form the focus of the sponsorship deals and the money raised will be ploughed back into the grass roots of the game.

The FA will meet dozens of leading companies over the next couple of months in a bid to persuade them to come on board from the start of next season. They plan to finalise most of their plans by the World Cup.

Ten leading companies — with no associations to alcohol or tobacco — will be asked to become associates for an initial sum of $1 million, giving them access to England players, the ability to use the three lions logos, promotional rights and tickets.

The program, called 'Football Associates', comes on top of the FA's reported $100 million pound kit deal with Umbro.

The FA are confident that the deals will actually benefit the future of the game.

Phil Carling, the FA's commercial director, said: '"Every penny will be put back into football to make the sport stronger. Commercialism is not only a negative thing, we are not a profit-making organisation.

"This will develop coaching right down, from the age of six onwards, as well as the coaches' association to develop excellence at the grass roots levels so we can produce more stars like Liverpool's Michael Owen."

VOGTS TO REMAIN

Berti Vogts said he intends to remain as Germany's national team coach after this year's World Cup.

Vogts, who has headed the national coaching set-up since succeeding Franz Beckenbauer in 1990, had previously left open his plans after France 98.

But the former Borussia Moenchengladbach and German international defender said he made his decision during the Bundesliga's winter shutdown.

"I spoke to my family about the future during the winter break," he told Bild newspaper.

"Everything was clear after that — building up a new team is an attractive prospect, I'm going to continue."

Of course Vogts' ultimate destiny depends on his employers, the German Football Association (DFB), but his stocks are high after guiding Germany to victory in the 1996 European Championship in England.

His previous reluctance to discuss his future prompted speculation he may want to step out of the limelight after eight years in the high-profile job.

Media reports had tipped Kaiserslautern coach Otto Rehhagel and Borussia Dortmund's Ottmar Hitzfeld as possible successors.

'FREE' TRANSFER ISSUE

A bid for all players over 24 to be allowed to move without a transfer fee at the end of their contracts is gathering pace.

A meeting will be held this week in England, attended by all four Home Associations, to discuss the issue. But Scottish clubs were split on whether they should accept the new rules (planned to start in July), or put it off for another year.

SFA and Scottish league officials met all 40 clubs to outline the idea, and the problems. One insider said: "Some were certainly on the side of accepting it should begin immediately, others wanted it held off and others just had not made up their minds."

The English FA has already stated they want the idea to be brought in this July. The Scottish League and the SFA are both likely to hold special general meetings to allow the clubs to vote.

League official David Thomson said: "The big problem is if England agree to the new method and Scotland don't. It would mean that players out of contract in England could move up here without a fee but for those in Scotland a fee would be required."

But it was also pointed out during the meeting that the English may decide to ignore the Scottish position if that was the case. That could result in the split up of the International Football League board, opening the way for disputes to be settled by court action.

SOTON CHASE RANGER

Southampton are lining up a shock move to rescue Rangers' $2.5 million misfit Stephen Wright from Ibrox.

The Premiership club sent scouts north to the Old Firm reserve clash at the weekend to run the rule over the 26-year-old full back. Wright, who is out of contract in the summer, has suffered a disastrous spell with the champions since his big-money switch from Pittodrie two-and-a-half years ago.

The defender has been plagued by injuries and poor form and has made just seven League appearances for Walter Smith's side in the past 30 months.

He is well out of the first-team picture at Ibrox and could be allowed to leave for a cut-price fee of around $800,000. Saints boss Dave Jones is keen to add to his defensive set-up and needs a naturally right-sided defender.

Meanwhile, Rangers reserve midfielder Gary Bollan has been linked with a move to Stoke City.

UNITED DRAW BLANK

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson appears to have called time on his search for new players.

Only players signed before last Saturday could play in the later stages of this season's European Cup, Cup Winners' Cup and UEFA Cup.

Ferguson, and his assistant Brian Kidd, have been scouring the continent in the last month but have not found the quality of player they had been seeking to improve their squad.

Although a late signing cannot be ruled out, Ferguson said on Thursday: "It doesn't look like we'll be bringing anyone in now.

"We wanted players who would better the people already here, but I'm satisfied we already have a squad capable of coping with the rest of the season."

Ferguson had targeted a midfielder and another forward, although that position could be filled by someone far closer to home.

Carlisle's highly-rated 20-year-old striker Matt Jansen could be invited for a second week of training at Old Trafford, although Ferguson is unwilling to meet Carlisle's asking price of $3.3 million for the youngster.

While one youngster could be joining United, another seems poised to leave with 22-year-old defender John O'Kane set for a move to Everton.

One problem for Ferguson, however, is Teddy Sheringham's fitness.

He has not trained since injuring a calf three weeks ago and if the problem drags on he could be in doubt for England's friendly against Chile at Wembley on February 11.

But one piece of news to gladden the heart, Man Utd have won their first trophy of 1998 when Alex Ferguson was voted 'Most Unpopular Man In British Football' in a recent survey.

Oh well, can't win them all Fergie...

NEW DEAL FOR KEWELL

Talented teenager Harry Kewell was celebrating a pay rise and the green light to help Leeds stay on course for Wembley.

Manager George Graham has rewarded the 19-year-old's progress with an improved contract and Australia's coach Terry Venables has freed Kewell for this month's FA Cup fifth round Birmingham tie.

Nice one 'arry.

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